SERAPHIC FEATHER

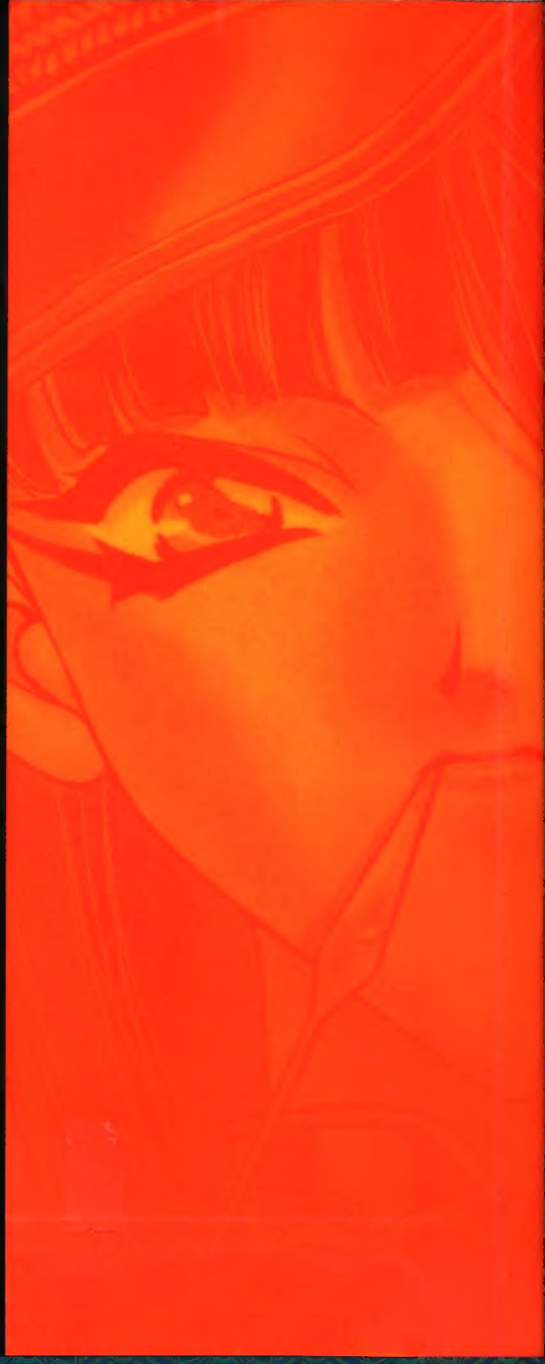
target zone

hiroyuki UTATANE | toshiya TAKEDA

Buried beneath the Moon's surface is an ancient alien starship ready to give up its secrets, and a moon base becomes a deadly battleground for possession of the Emblem Seeds, the key to harnessing the craft's incredible power. Ruthless corporate operatives, scientifically augmented government agents, and deadly robots of unknown origin are all drawn in a lethal orbit around the precious Seeds. And young paranormal Sunao Oumi, unwittingly pulled into the maelstrom, has become the key player in a game that could decide the future. But although numerous parties are vying to win this violent contest, they'd better all watch their step: the ball they're playing with is not of this world...and it's just possible the original owners want it back!

"I found myself getting pulled in more and more with each page."

– Greg McElhatten, iCOMICS.com



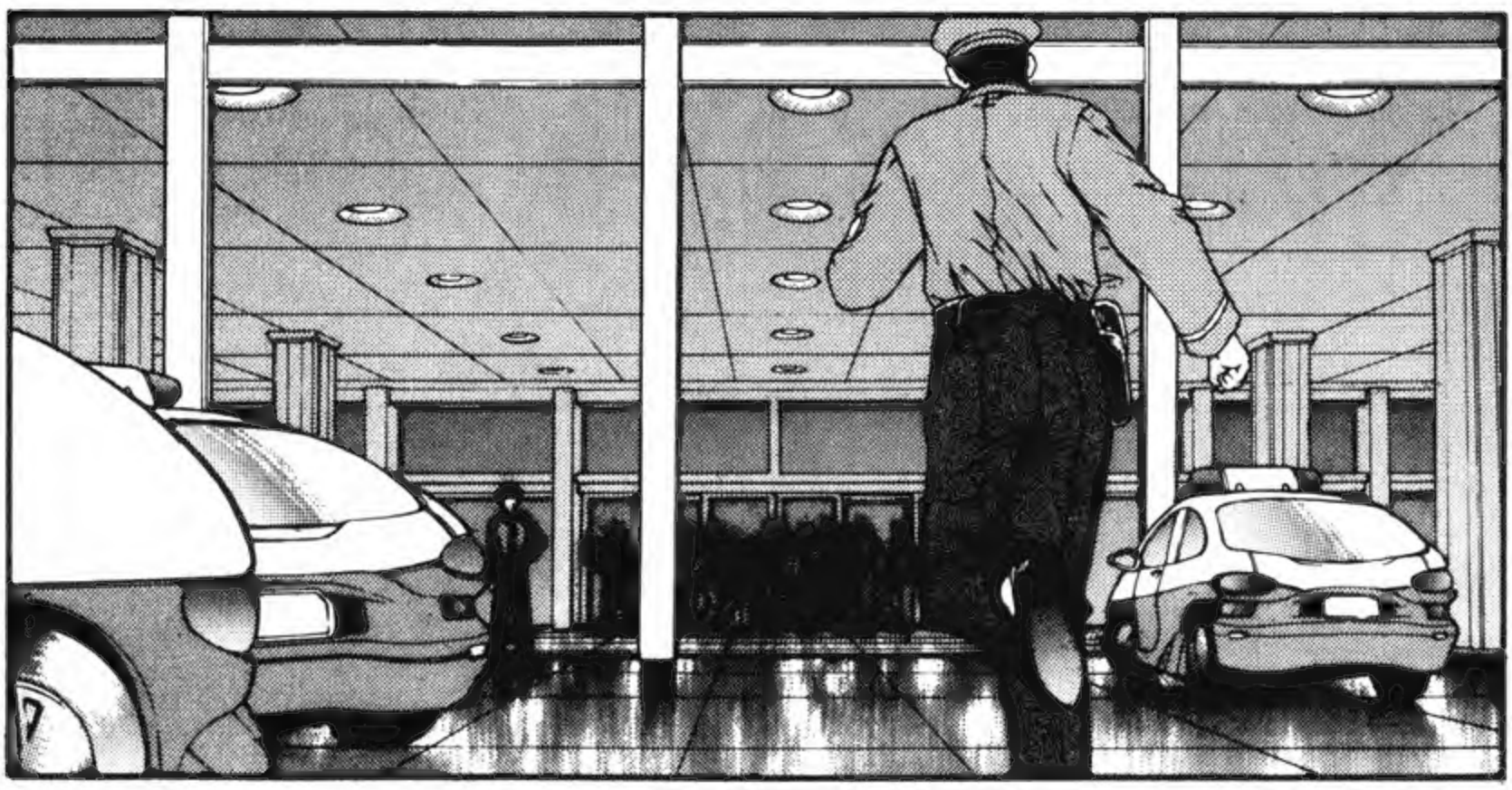
SERAPHIC FEATHER

Target Zone

SERAPH. FEATHER

Act 18

WEOOO
WEOOO



ONLY *LAW ENFORCEMENT* PERSONNEL ARE PERMITTED BEYOND THIS POINT! NO *MEDIA* ALLOWED, ALL RIGHT?

I SAID *GET BACK,* DAMN IT!

OFFICER?! WAS THIS AN *ACCIDENT?*

WE'VE HEARD REPORTS OF A *SHOOTING!* CAN YOU *CONFIRM* THIS?

HOW MANY *RES-TAURANT PATRONS* WERE HURT?

DAMN. HOW *ANNOYING.* WE'LL HAVE TO SLIP OUT THE *BACK,* THEN...

UM... ER, MISS *M-ZAK* ...?

SHOULDN'T WE TELL THE POLICE ABOUT, UM... ABOUT, YOU KNOW, WHAT HAPPENED...?

SUNAO... WOULD YOU REALLY CARE TO TRY AND EXPLAIN "WHAT HAPPENED" TO THE AUTHORITIES...?
"OFFICER, A MONSTER JUST GHOSTED IN THROUGH A SOLID WALL AND RIPPED OUT THIS GUY'S HEART, THEN SLAPPED ME AROUND DESPITE MY UNREGISTERED AND POSSIBLY ILLEGAL METATALENTS?

"OH, AND HERE'S THE GOOD PART-- THE MONSTER VAPORIZED MY CUTE FRIEND HERE FROM THE WAIST UP...
"...BUT FORTUNATELY, SHE MAGICALLY RECONSTRUCTED HERSELF, GOOD AS NEW! OH, NO, OFFICER... I'M NOT DELUSIONAL...!"
UH... HMM.

JUST THINK OF IT *THIS* WAY, DEAR...

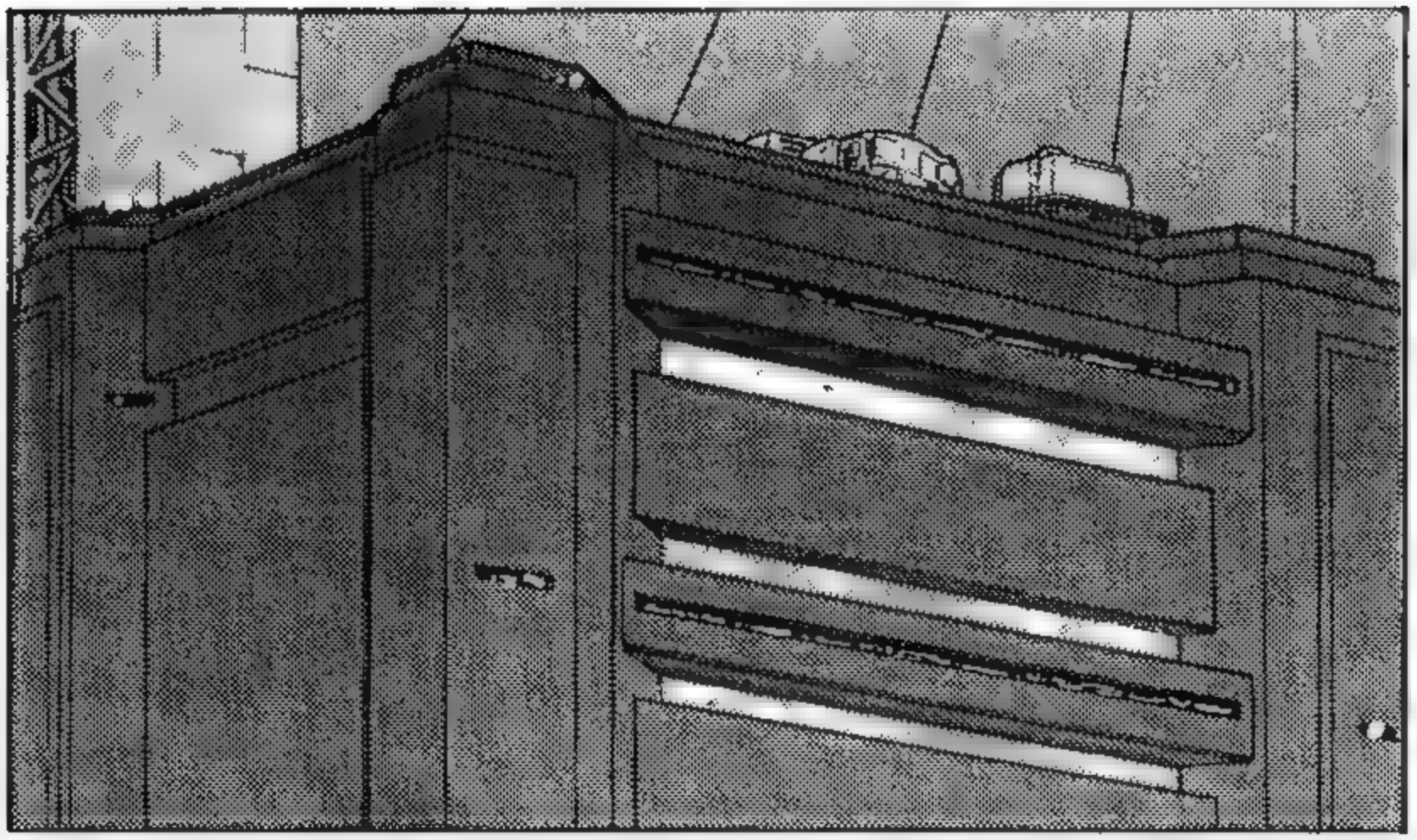
...WE DON'T WANT TO *CONFUSE* THE POOR AUTHORITIES WITH OUR *COLORFUL* AND *COMPLICATED* LIVES, DO WE...?

DON'T *SWEAT* IT, SUNAO. LET'S GET *OUT* OF HERE, SHALL WE?

S-*SORRY*, MISS M-ZAK... I WASN'T *THINKING*...

MISS M-ZAK... DO YOU STILL WANT TO GO TO THE *U.N. BUILDING?*

YEAH, I DO.
HAND ME THE AUTOTAXI'S *PHONE*, WILL YOU?
BEEP
HEY.
IT'S *ME*.



YOU HEARD *CORRECTLY*, ERNEST. *APEP HEIDEMANN*, MY OWN SON.
HE'S WORKING WITH *DYKSTRA CORPORATION*, IN DEFIANCE OF U.N. POLICY. HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF COMPLEX *SCHEME* UNDERWAY, THAT MUCH IS CLEAR.

ALL THAT REMAINS *UNCLEAR* IS PRECISELY *WHAT* HE'S UP TO...
HEIDEMANN...
...D-DO YOU...
...DO YOU [illegible]*LIZE* WHAT YOU'RE *SAYING*...?

FOR YOU TO TALK THAT WAY ABOUT YOUR OWN SON...

THE PHRASE "MY SON" MAY NOT BE *EN-TIRELY* ACCURATE.

HMM...?

TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, LAST YEAR'S DISASTROUS, SO-CALLED "*ACCIDENT*"...

...BLEW MY SON TO BITS.

WHAT—?!

AH. PARDON ME.

BEEP BEEP

HMM... YES, I *SEE.* UNDER-STOOD.

VERY WELL... SET THE PLAN IN *MOTION,* THEN. I'LL BE ALONG SHORTLY.

BEEP

SO. IT SEEMS WE'LL HAVE TO USE *FORCE* AFTER ALL...

?!

YOU *WILL* CLEAN UP THE *MESS* AFTERWARDS... WON'T YOU, *U.N. REPRESENTATIVE ERNEST?*

ACTUALLY, THAT'S WHAT I CAME TO *ASK* YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE.

NOW, IF YOU'LL *EXCUSE* ME...

WH- *WHAT...?*

WAIT! *HEIDEMANN!*

I'M CLOSING IN ON YOU NOW, APEP.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR PLAN IS, BUT I WON'T LET YOU GET AWAY WITH IT...

I UNDER-STAND.

LATER.

WHEW

I'M SORRY, KEI. NO MORE *SIGHTSEEING* FOR A WHILE, I'M AFRAID...

SUNAO? MY APOLOGIES, BUT CAN YOU DELIVER *KEI* TO THE *U.N. BUILDING* FOR ME?

HUH?

UH... *SURE...!*

THANKS. I *TRUST* YOU, SUNAO.

WH-?

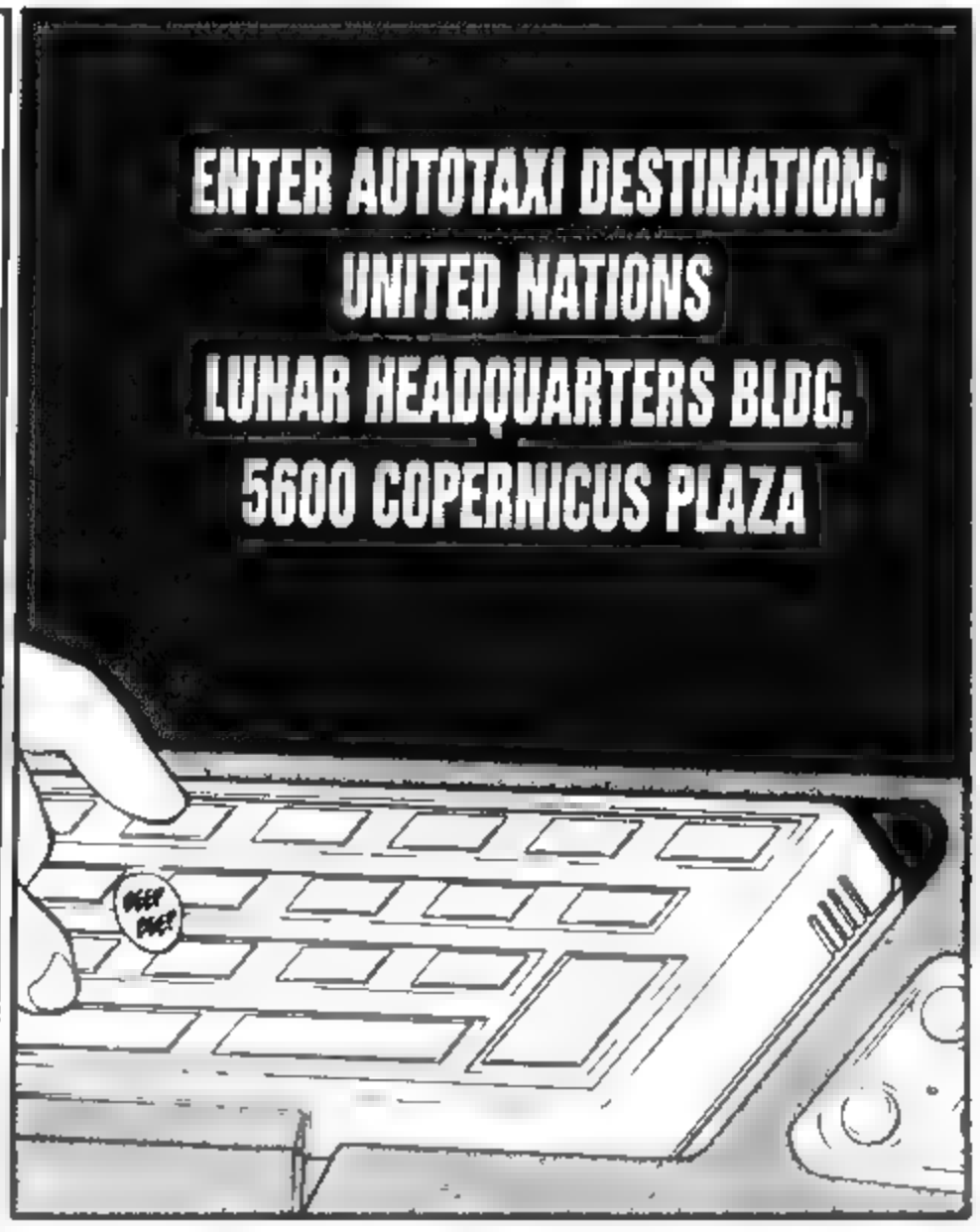
HUH?

MISS M-ZAK?

DON'T *WORRY*, SUNAO! I'LL TRANSFER SOME MONEY TO COVER THE *AUTOTAXI*, OKAY?

HUH... THAT'S ONE IMPULSIVE LADY...!

FM.FD


ENTER AUTOTAXI DESTINATION:
UNITED NATIONS
LUNAR HEADQUARTERS BLDG.
5600 COPERNICUS PLAZA

KREEK

HMM...

THANK GOD SHE'S *ALL RIGHT...!*

HAHH...

BUT *STILL...*

*...TO THINK SHE REALLY *IS* KEI, THE *VERY* SAME... *TOTALLY UN-CHANGED...!
*BUT...IT DOESN'T MAKE *SENSE...!*
*SHE *SHOULD* BE THREE YEARS *OLDER* THAN ME...BUT SHE LOOKS EVEN *YOUNGER* THAN THE PICTURES SHE SENT, BEFORE THAT *ACCIDENT* I THOUGHT SHE'D DIED IN...!*

OH, *MAN...*

NOT TO MENTION THAT WHOLE INCIDENT WITH THE *MONSTER...* AND KEI'S *RECONSTRUCTION...!*

"I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON...

"AND WHAT ABOUT *ME...?*

"I SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO USE *POWERS* ON THAT SCALE...!

"BEFORE NOW, I'VE ONLY BEEN CAPABLE OF *MINOR* PSYCHOKINESIS... SO *WHY...?*"

ZZZK

SUNAO?

GYAAA!

!?KEEK

HEH... S-SORRY ABOUT THAT, KEI...

Y-YOU *SURPRISED* ME, THERE...! ARE YOU *OKAY*...? HOW DO YOU *FEEL?*

UM, WELL... I'M *FINE*... BUT...

...ARE *YOU* OKAY, SUNAO?

YOU SEEM KINDA JUMPY... Y'KNOW?

HUH?

AH HA HA HA!

I'M *FINE*, REALLY! N-NEVER BEEN *BETTER!*

I DIDN'T GET VAPORIZED, AFTER ALL...!

HEH

HEH

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE U.N. *KOROLEV ADVANCED RESEARCH LABORATORY...?* I...I WANT TO *GO* THERE...!

HUH? YEAH, I *KNOW* THE PLACE, BUT...

...I'M *SORRY,* KEI. YOU *CAN'T* GO THERE

THAT FACILITY IS...*WAS...* ON THE SITE OF THAT DOME THAT *BLEW UP* LAST YEAR, AND, WELL...

...THEY HAVEN'T LET CIVILIANS *NEAR* IT EVER SINCE THE *ACCIDENT.* IT'S ON THE *OTHER SIDE* OF THE MOON, ANYWAY, SO WE'D HAVE QUITE A TRIP TO GET THERE...

"BLEW UP"...?

NO! YOU HAVE TO *DO* SOMETHING! I *HAVE* TO TALK TO MY *BROTHER-IN-LAW....!*

UM... CAN'T YOU JUST *CALL* HIM?

THE *PHONE* IS RIGHT OVER THERE...

...OR DO YOU *HAVE* TO SEE HIM *FACE TO FACE?*

UM... WELL, *YES,* I GUESS I *COULD...* JUST CALL...

KCHAK

BROTHER-IN-LAW...? I DIDN'T KNOW SHE HAD *ANY* SIBLINGS, LET ALONE *MARRIED* ONES...!

OH, WELL... JUST THE *LATEST* OF KEI'S *MYSTERIES,* I GUESS...!

...

?

NO ONE'S *ANSWERING?*

N-NO.

THIS LINE IS TEMPORARILY OUT OF SERVICE. WE WILL RESTORE SERVICE AS SOON AS--

UM, *SUNAO...?* ISN'T THERE *ANYTHING* YOU CAN DO?!

WELL... UM...

SAY, WEREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO *MEET* SOMEONE AT *U.N. HEADQUARTERS ...?*

OH!

THAT'S *RIGHT!* MY *FATHER-IN-LAW!*

CLICK

NO LUCK.

THEY SAY HE *TOOK OFF* ON SOME SORT OF BUSINESS. THEY DON'T KNOW *WHEN* HE'LL BE BACK...

:SIGH:

SUNAO! DO SOMETHING! YOU'RE A *GUIDE,* RIGHT?

ACK!

WHOO

AH...UM, WELL...B-BEFORE WE GO ANYWHERE... M-MAYBE WE SHOULD GET YOU SOME MORE CLOTHES...?

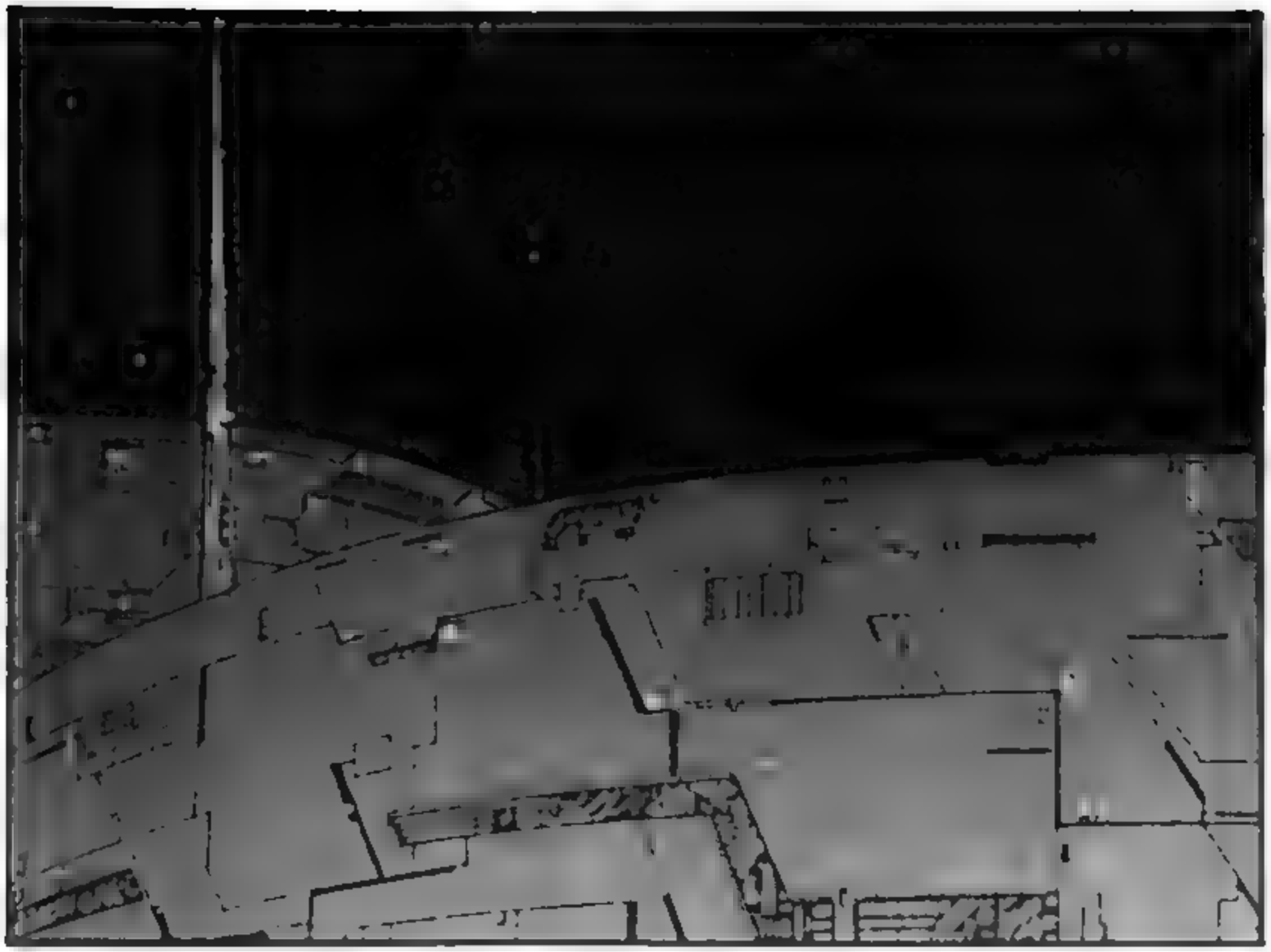
MORE... CLOTHES ...?

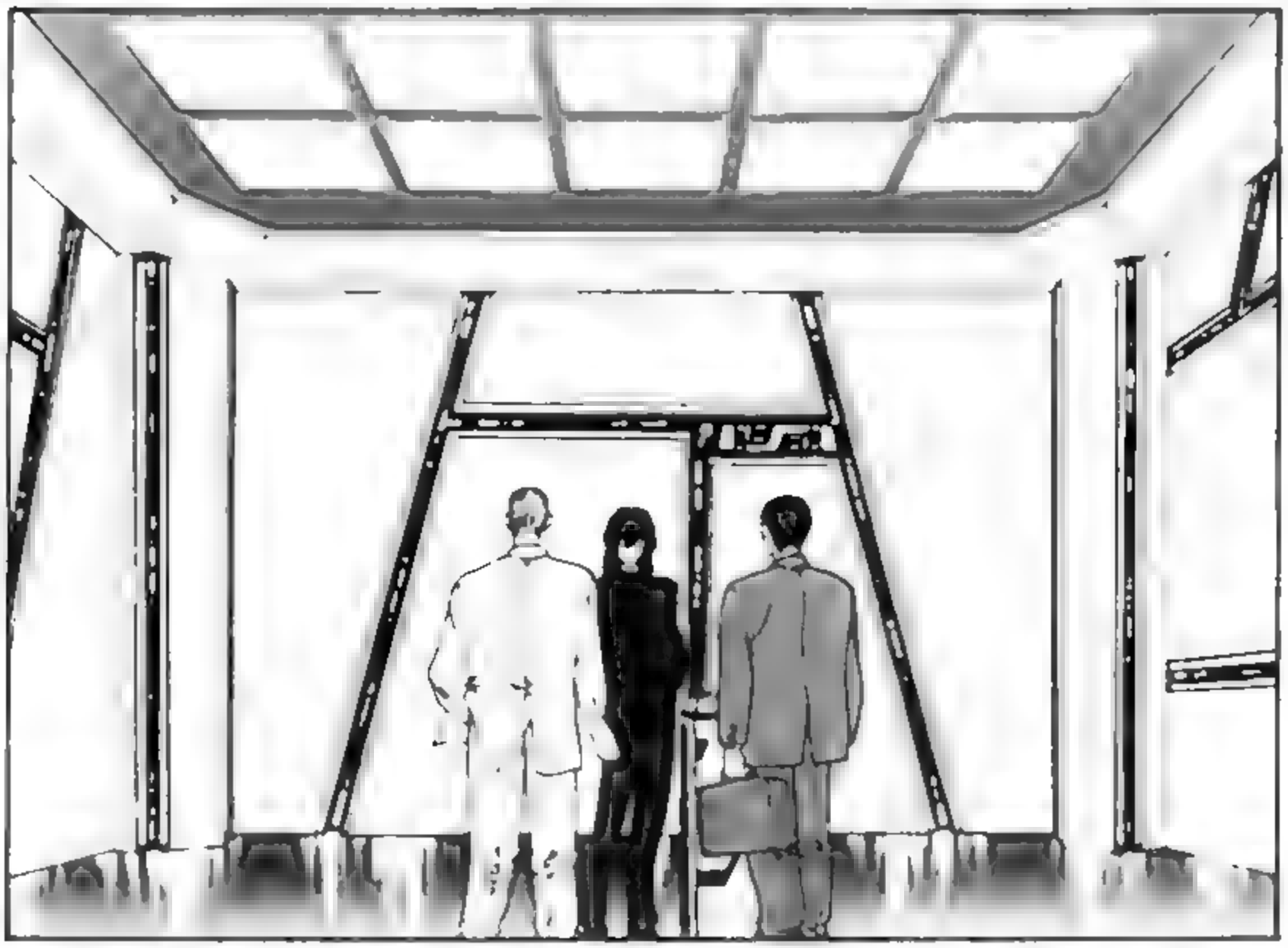
GYEEK.

SLAP

OWW!

H-HEY--!





Act 19

ARE THESE TO YOUR SATIS-FACTION, SIR?

:SIGH: MR. *HAYWARD... RIX,* IF I MAY BE INFORMAL... IS THIS YOUR IDEA OF A *JOKE...?*

HAHH...

WH-WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT--?!

I LOST *TWO* OF MY MEN... AND MY GOD-DAMNED *ARM*... AND YOU THINK IT'S A *JOKE?*

YOU GOD-DAMNED LITTLE *PUNK---!*

HUH?

WHSHH

AH--!

?!
PLSH

AAA!
SHSSSS
BLCCH

PGKK!

SPLSH

KTINKK

SPLSHH

OH, *DEAR.* I SEEM TO HAVE ACCIDENTALLY *MELTED* THAT *COUNTERFEIT* EMBLEM SEED.

I *DO* HOPE YOU'LL *FORGIVE* ME, RIX.

AAGH--!

R-RIX--!

HAFF

HKNG

A... A TRACER UNIT... IN THE CRYSTAL...?

NOT A VERY IMPRESSIVE *TRADE*, RIX.

YOU LOST YOUR *MEN*, AND YOUR *ARM*, IN EXCHANGE FOR A PAIR OF *TRACER-EQUIPPED FAKES*.

.....!

HAHH!

HAHH!

AT THE *VERY* LEAST, RIX... YOUR [redacted] *SKILLS* ARE SUSPECT.

OF COURSE, ONLY A *HANDFUL* OF HUMANS HAVE EVER SEEN A *REAL* EMBLEM SEED.

I CAN'T REALLY FAULT YOU FOR YOUR *IGNORANCE*, I SUPPOSE. BUT...

...ARE YOU *REALLY* THE BEST THAT *DYKSTRA SECURITY* HAS TO OFFER...?

:RRGH:

M-MAYBE SEIZING THESE *FAKES* WAS A SERIOUS FAILURE, *YES...* B-BUT CIRCUMSTANCES *CONSPIRED* AGAINST US, SIR!

AN UNFORESEEN *POWER OUTAGE* SOMEHOW DISABLED OUR *SMART DRONES...*

...AND BESIDES, WE WERE UP AGAINST *ATTIM M-ZAK,* A HIGH-LEVEL *AUGMENTED OPERATIVE...!*

AH...THE FAMOUS *M-ZAK.* YOU CALLED HER THE *"SCARLET ANGEL,"* DIDN'T YOU, RIX?

WE WOULD'VE NEEDED *OPTIMAL* FIRE SUPPORT TO--

H-*HEIDEMANN...!*

HOW... HOW DID YOU KNOW WHAT I *SAID* TO HER...?

I WAS KEPT INFORMED BY AN... *IMPARTIAL OBSERVER,* SHALL WE SAY.

I ASSIGNED *MONITORS* TO ENSURE THAT YOU DIDN'T GO OVER-BOARD. YOUR *"DIRECT INTERVENTION UNIT"* HAS AN UNPLEASANT REPUTATION FOR, WELL, *MESSINESS.*

LUNAR CITY IS A SMALL, EVEN *INTIMATE* PLACE. UNCONTROLLED MAYHEM ATTRACTS *CONSIDERABLE* ATTENTION IN SUCH A SETTING.

YOU WENT *TOO FAR* WITH YOUR *EARTH*-STYLE TACTICS, RIX.

YOU EVEN DRAGGED *CIVILIANS,* I'M TOLD, INTO YOUR POINTLESS AND *UNNECESSARY* BRAWL WITH *M-ZAK.*

YEAH? WELL, WHO THE HELL *CARES* IF WE WHACK SOME *INNOCENT GODDAMNED BYSTANDERS?*

DYKSTRA CAN AFFORD TO COVER UP A *HUNDRED* DEAD CIVILIANS, DAMN IT!

AH, *YES.* I CAN SEE THE HAM-FISTED, LAUGHABLY *UNTHINKING* ATTITUDE THAT ALLOWED A *WOMAN* TO UTTERLY HUMILIATE YOU.

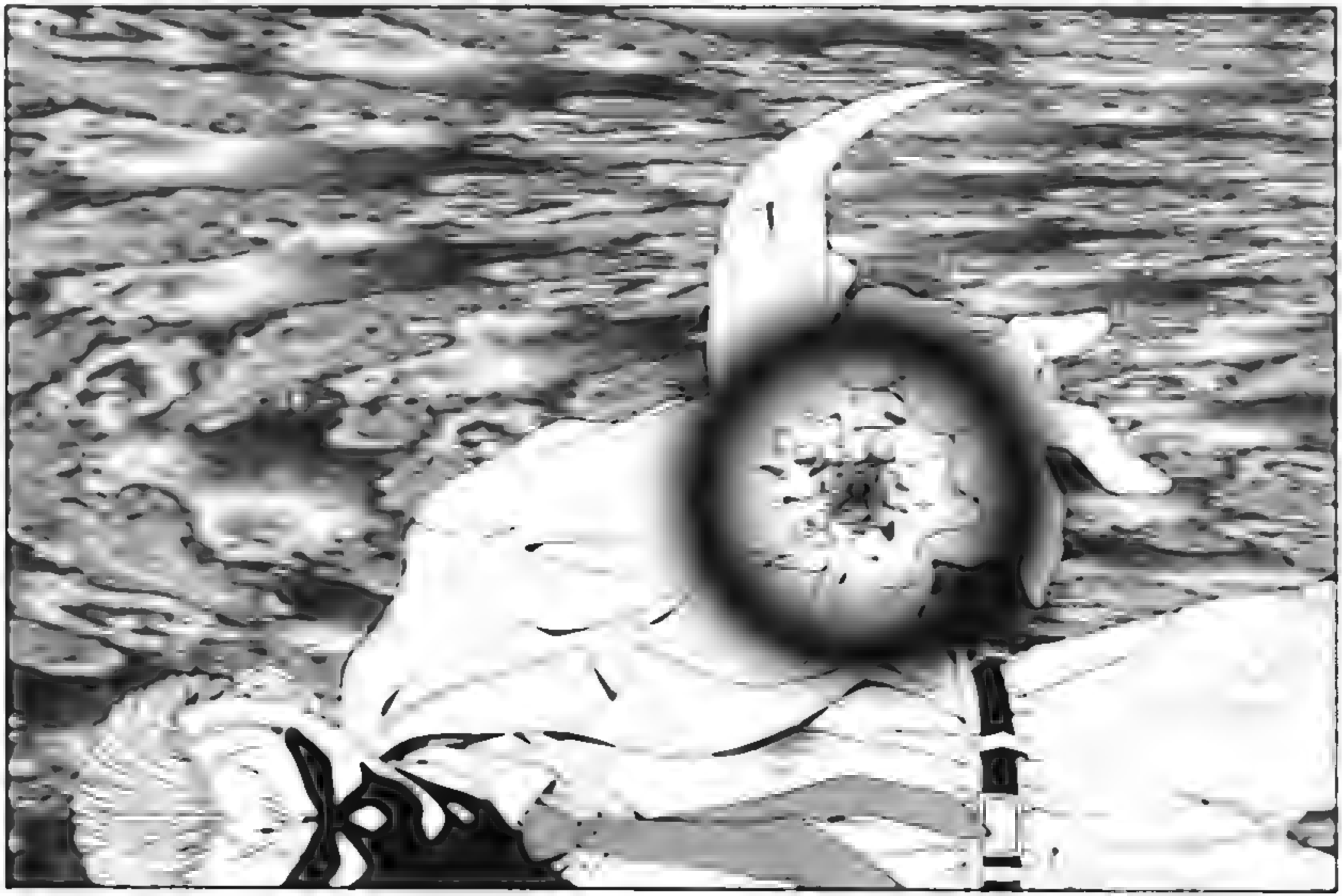
DID I *ORDER* YOU TO KILL THE U.N. INVESTIGATOR, RIX? I DID *NOT.*

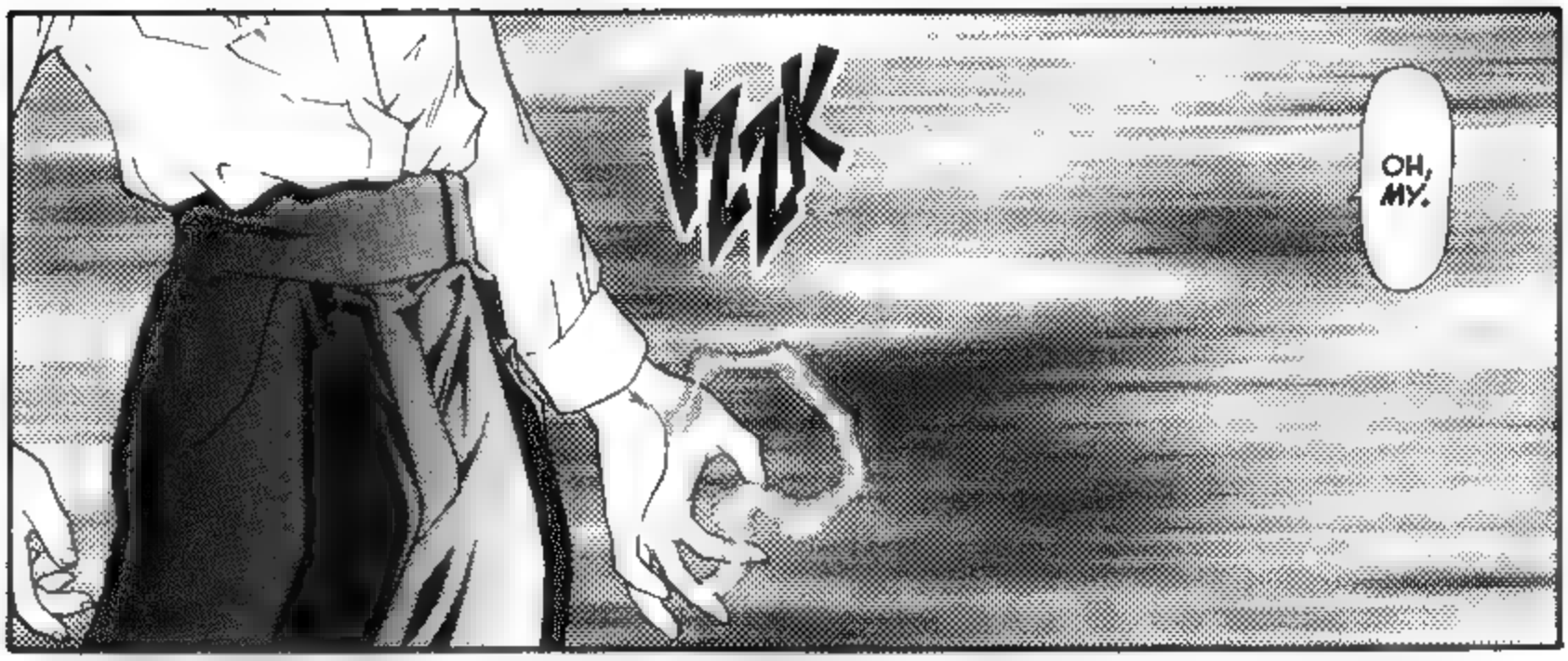
IF YOU HAD JUST *SNUCK IN* AND LIFTED THE BRIEFCASE LIKE A COMMON THIEF --AS I *RECOM-MENDED*--NONE OF THIS WOULD'VE HAPPENED...

...AND YOU WOULDN'T BE *BLUBBERING* LIKE A LITTLE GIRL ABOUT YOUR *MISSING ARM.*

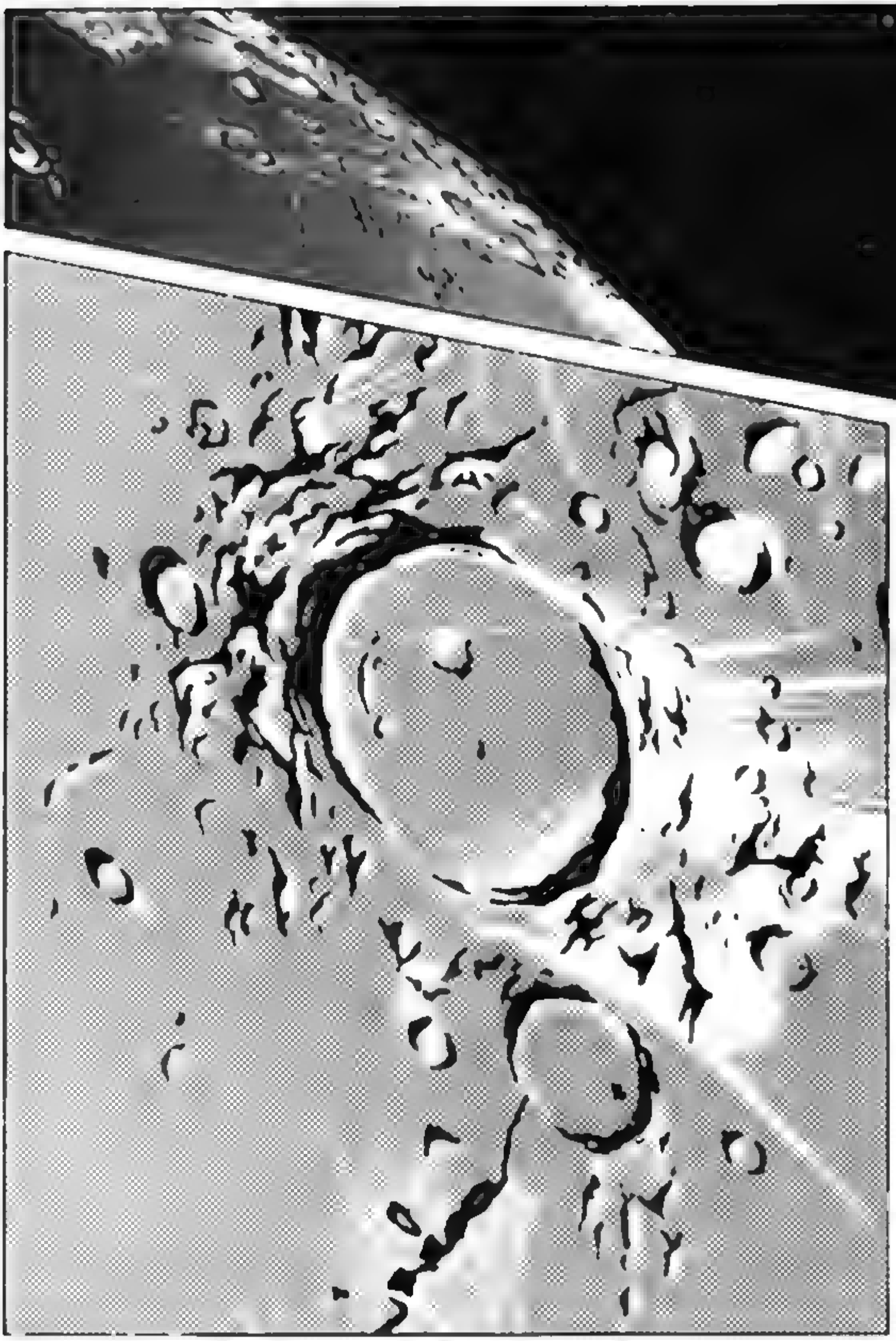
KRAKK

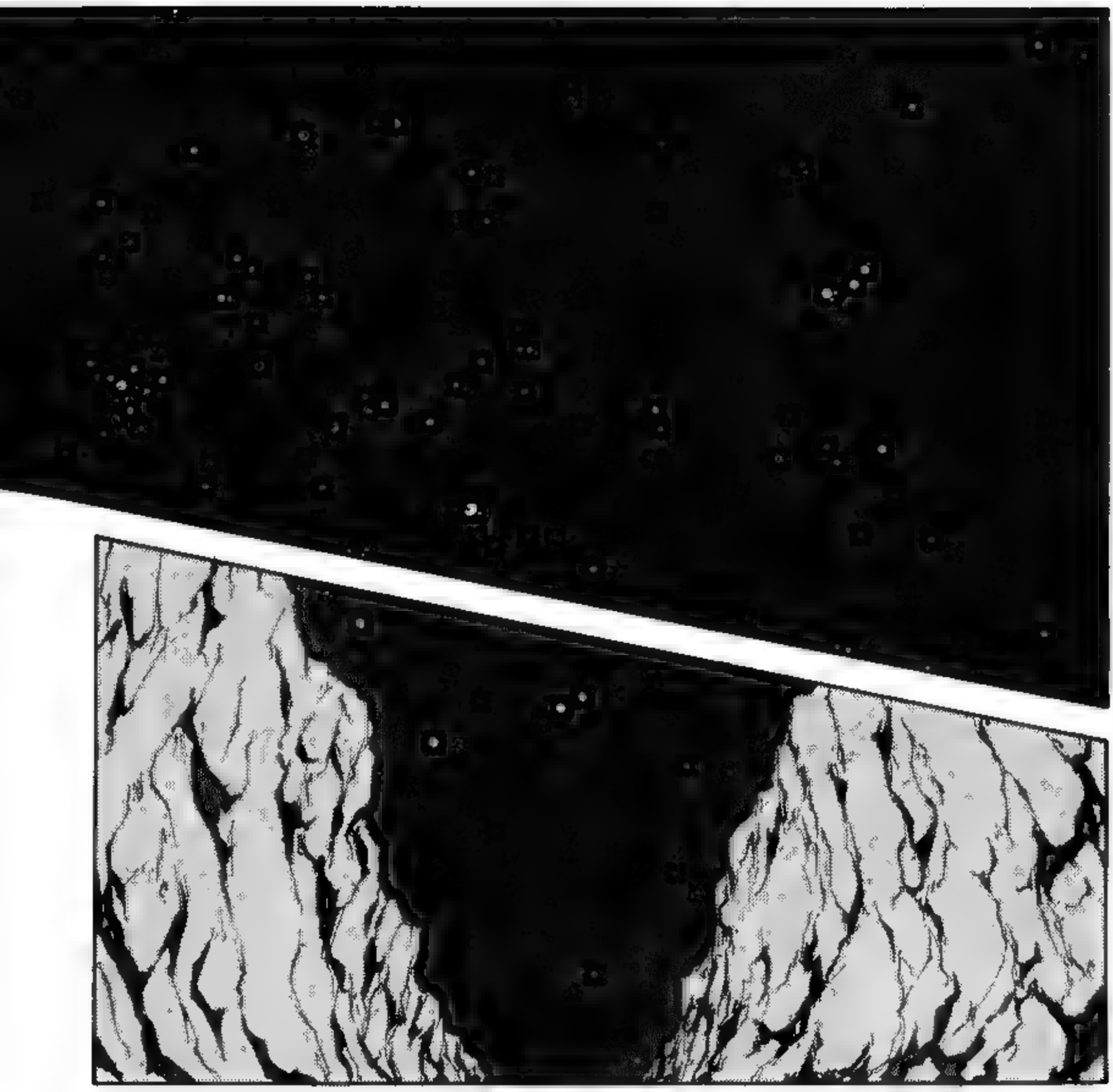
RRGG!



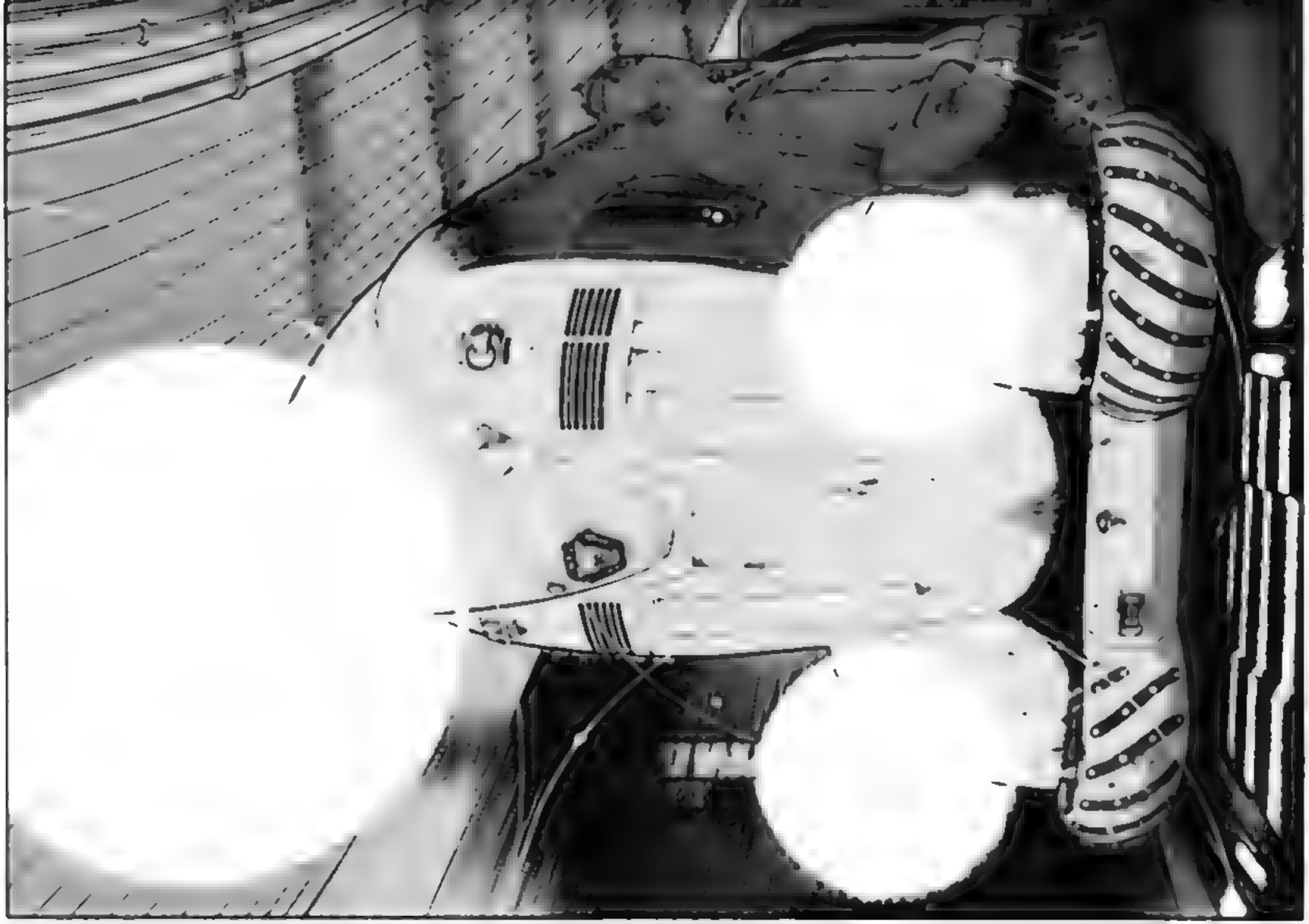

VRZK
OH, MY.

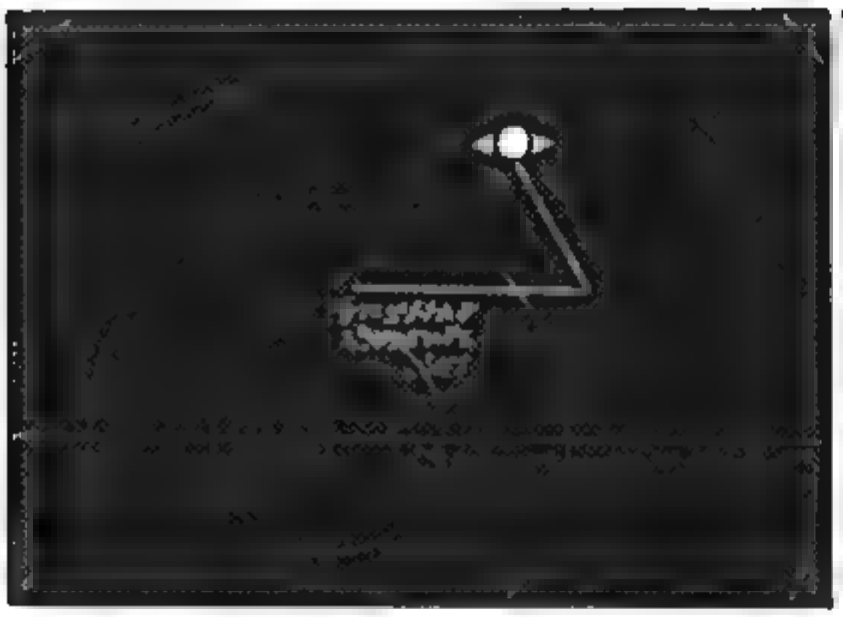
I'VE NOT TASTED SUCH HATRED IN QUITE SOME TIME...!
SKRAKK



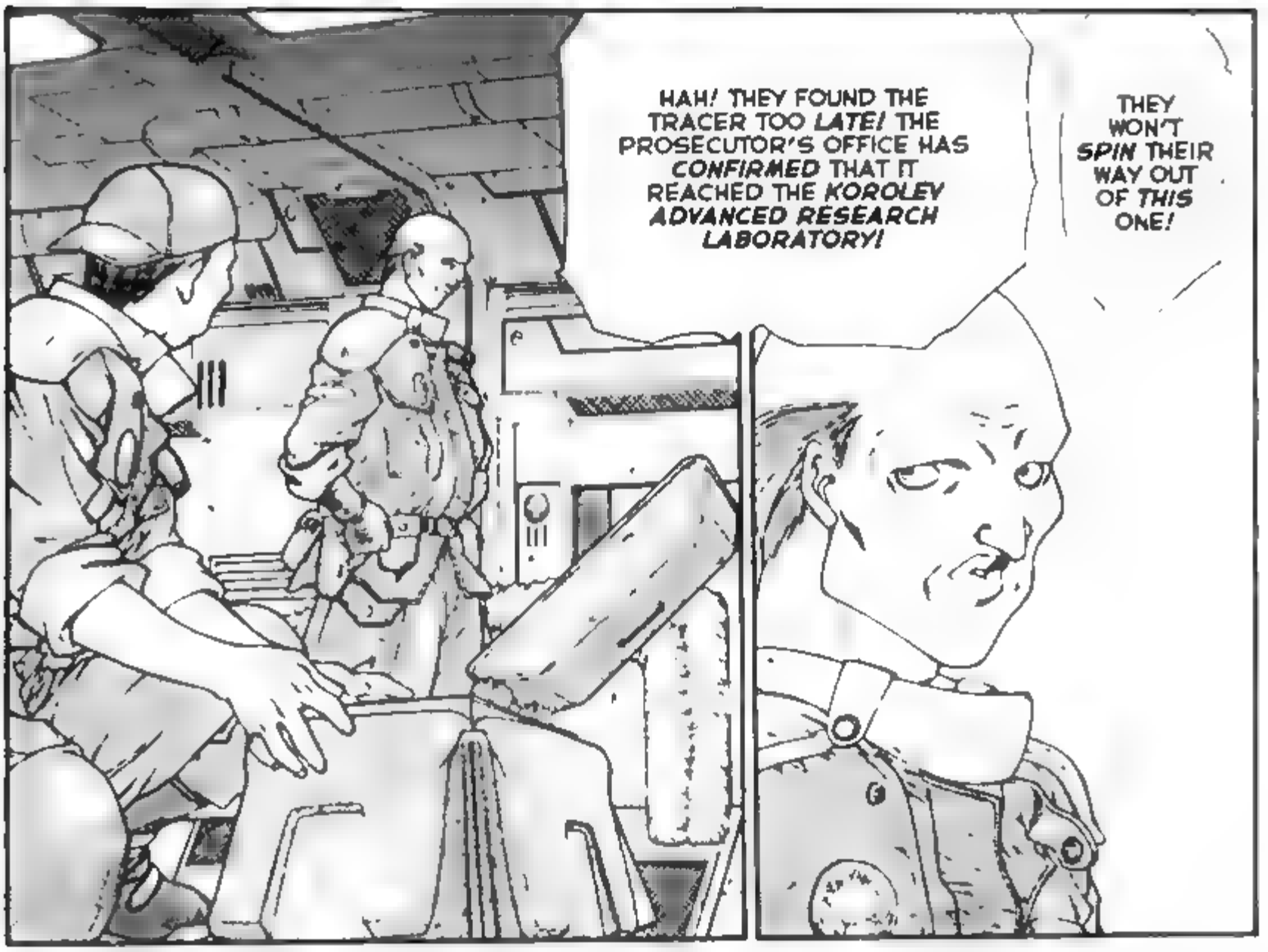


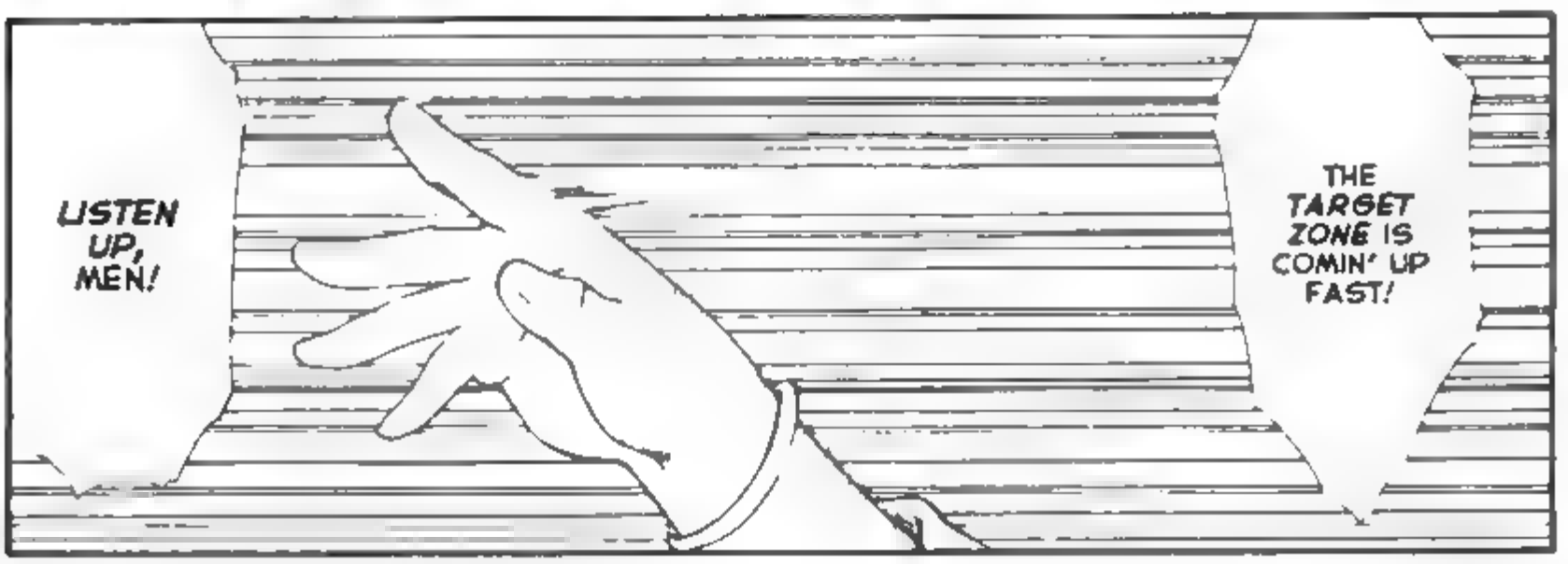
SHOM





SIR! THE SIGNAL'S VANISHED!


HAH! THEY FOUND THE TRACER TOO LATE! THE PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE HAS CONFIRMED THAT IT REACHED THE KOROLEV ADVANCED RESEARCH LABORATORY!
THEY WON'T SPIN THEIR WAY OUT OF THIS ONE!


LISTEN UP, MEN!
THE TARGET ZONE IS COMIN' UP FAST!

OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO SEIZE THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR, ***APEP HEIDEMANN,*** AND ALL HIS RESEARCH DATA. YOU CLEAR? THAT MEANS ***HEIDEMANN*** AND THE ***MAIN COMPUTERS*** HAVE TO BE KEPT INTACT... BUT THAT DOESN'T APPLY TO ANYONE OR ANYTHING ***ELSE*** IN THERE, OKAY?

IF YOU'RE FACING A SERIOUS ***THREAT,*** NEUTRALIZE IT BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY!

WE HAVE FULL ***CLEARANCE*** FOR THE USE OF LETHAL FORCE, UNDERSTAND?

NNF

KCHAK

FASHA!

!

WHOA! WHOSE TAIL—?

HEY, BABE! YOU NEED A BOYFRIEND, BY ANY CHANCE?

HEY! ISN'T THAT—?

YUM, YUM! THAT'S MY IDEA OF A HOT BATTLESUIT!

THP THP

CHAK

FWOB

YO!

FMP FMP

LEMME GUESS... YOU'RE *ATTIM M-ZAK*, RIGHT? THE *SCARLET ANGEL*...?

Act 20

HRMMMM

DAMN! YOU'RE KILLIN' ME WITH THAT GRIM OL' FACE, GIRL!

SMACK

SO... D'YOU SUPPOSE YOU COULD TELL OL' LEN...

...JUST WHAT THE HELL KINDA LOONY-TUNE OP I'VE ENDED UP ON?

Y'SEE, SINCE WHEN DOES A SIMPLE OL' SEARCH OF A CIVILIAN RESEARCH LAB...

...REQUIRE THE FOLLOWIN' *UNUSUAL* ITEMS...?

ONE, A FULL *BATTALION'S* WORTH OF BADASS ELITE SPECIAL-OPS TROOPS!

WHAM!

TWO, SAID BATTALION A-*TROJAN-HORSIN'* INTO THE FACILITY BY WAY OF A COMMAN-DEERED *FREIGHT TRAIN...*

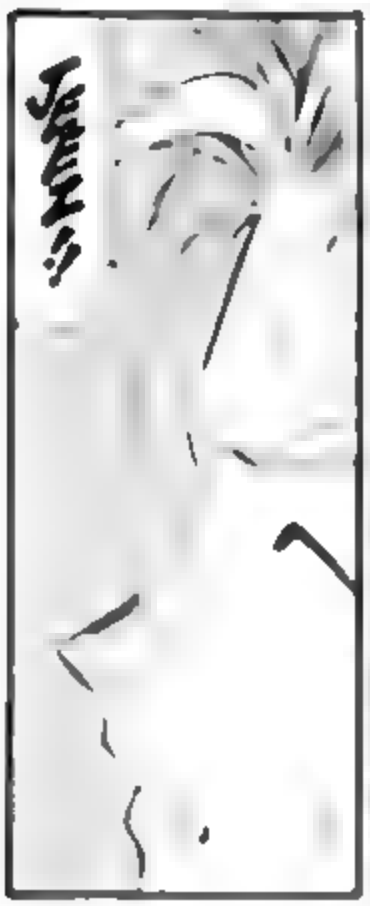
...UNDER A TOTAL *COMM BLACKOUT,* BY THE WAY!

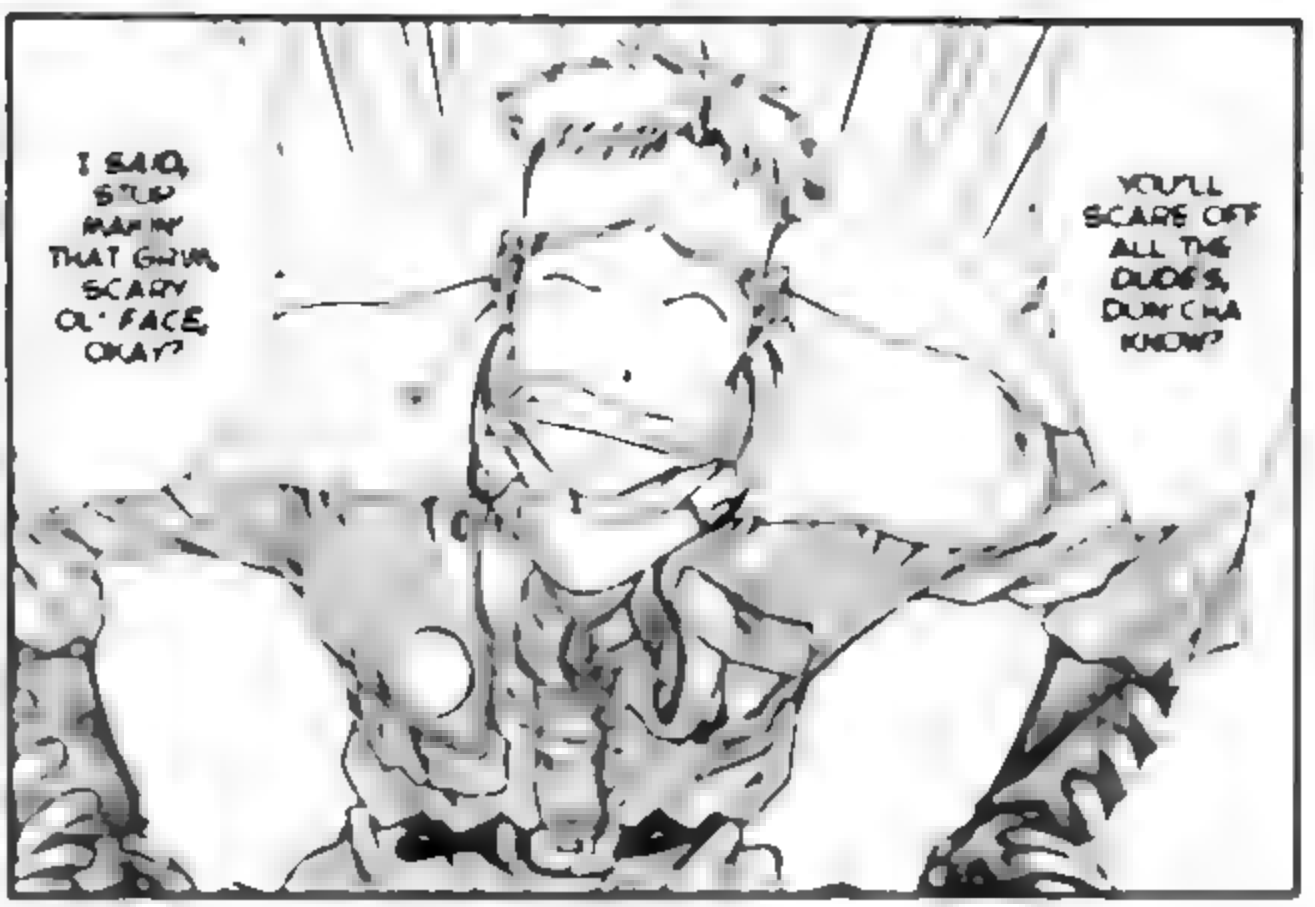
AND *THREE,* THE SCARY OL' *SCARLET ANGEL* TAGGING ALONG!

CLEARLY,

OH, PUH-LEEZE! BE A LITTLE MORE PRETENTIOUS, WHY DON'T YA?

NOPE... YOU'RE A-HIDIN' SUMETHING FROM OL' LEN, AREN'T YA, GIRL? I CAN TELL!


JEEN!?


I SAID, STOP RAPIN' THAT GNIVA SCARY OL' FACE, OKAY?
YOU'LL SCARE OFF ALL THE DUDES, DUN'CHA KNOW?

WELL, HOPE YOU DON'T SCARE OFF THAT DUDE YOU'RE IN *LOVE* WITH, GIRL. 'COURSE, YOU'RE PROBABLY A-*HIDIN'* THAT FROM HIM. AM I RIGHT...?

!

HOW... HOW THE HELL DID HE KNOW THAT...?

YOUR FACE CAN'T BE READ, CAN IT?

HAHH...?

BECAUSE YOUR EXPRESSIONS KEEP *CHANGING*, LIKE A PACK OF *CARDS* CONSTANTLY BEING SHUFFLED, SHIFTING SO FAST THAT THEY HIDE THE *REAL* YOU.

WELL, I CAN'T DO THAT.

GOLLY, GOSH, AN' GEE WHIZ, MISS M-ZAK! SO YOUR APPROACH IS TO HIDE BEHIND A SCARY OL' *POKER FACE*, RIGHT?

WELL, I CAN'T DO THAT... SEE?

BUT IT'S KINDA *CUTE* HOW YOUR FEELINGS SHOW RIGHT THROUGH THAT FACE OF YOURS *ANYWAY,* GIRL.

UPSIE-DAISY!

WELL, LIKE MY MAMA USED TO SAY, "WE'RE ALL *FLOWERS* UNTIL WE *DIE*" ...RIGHT?

SO LET'S *TAKE IT EASY,* AND GET OUTTA THIS WITH OUR SKINS *INTACT,* HUH?

AKK—!

FWD

UH... HOWDY ...?

FWAPP

WHAT'D SHE SAY, NEWBIE?

DID YA *GET* ANYTHING? *HUH?*

C'MON! SPILL YER GUTS...OR WE'LL SPILL *'EM* FOR YUH!

OUCH!

WAIT A SEC!

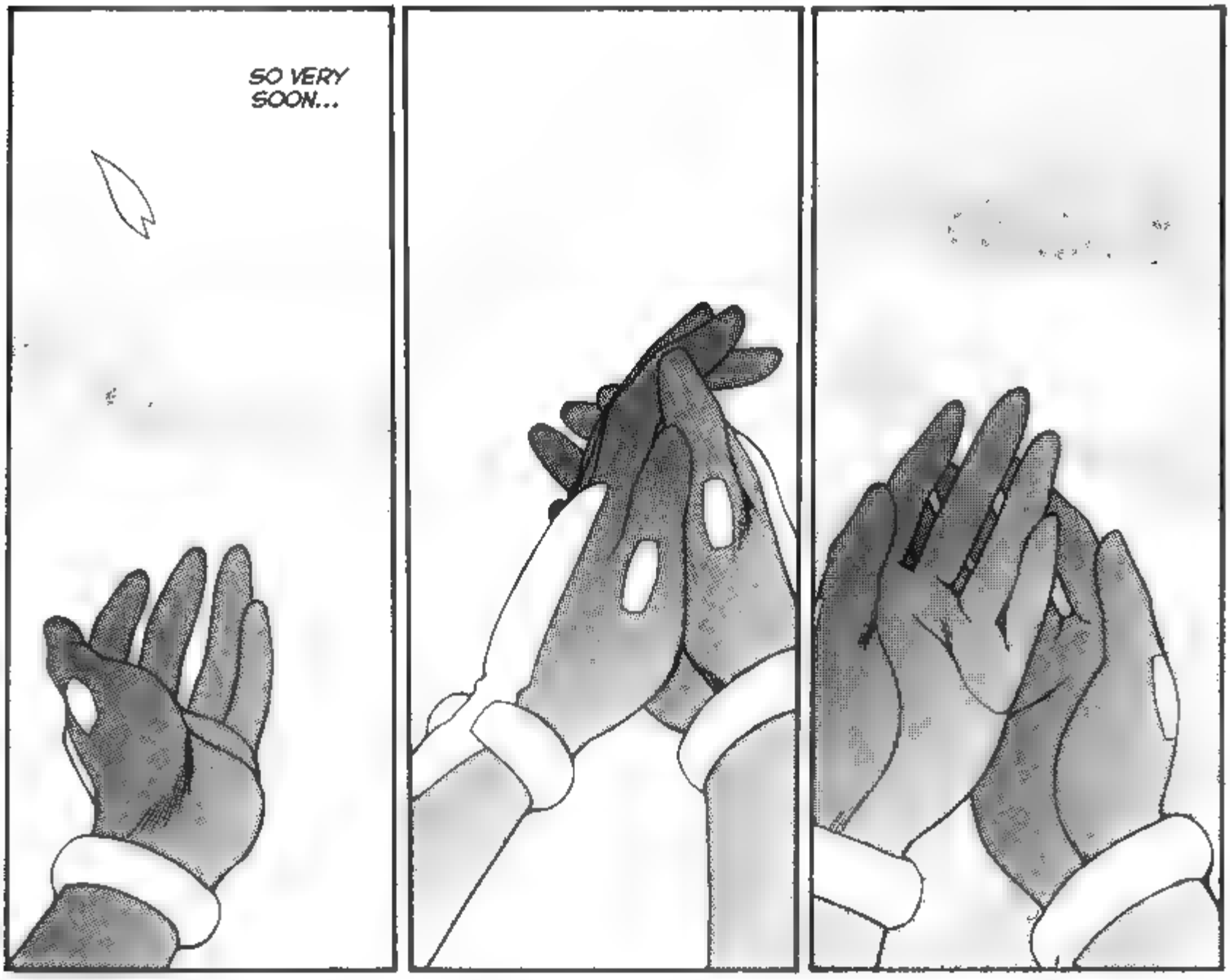
WHOA!

ALL FLOWERS... UNTIL WE DIE...?

BUT MY FLOWER HAS SO LITTLE TIME LEFT TO BLOOM...

...SOON THE PETALS WILL FALL, LIKE THOSE FLOWERS...

SO VERY SOON...



LIKE THOSE FLOWERS...

...THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS...

BIG BROTHER SUNAO!

H-HEY! BE CAREFUL, OKAY?

WHEEE!

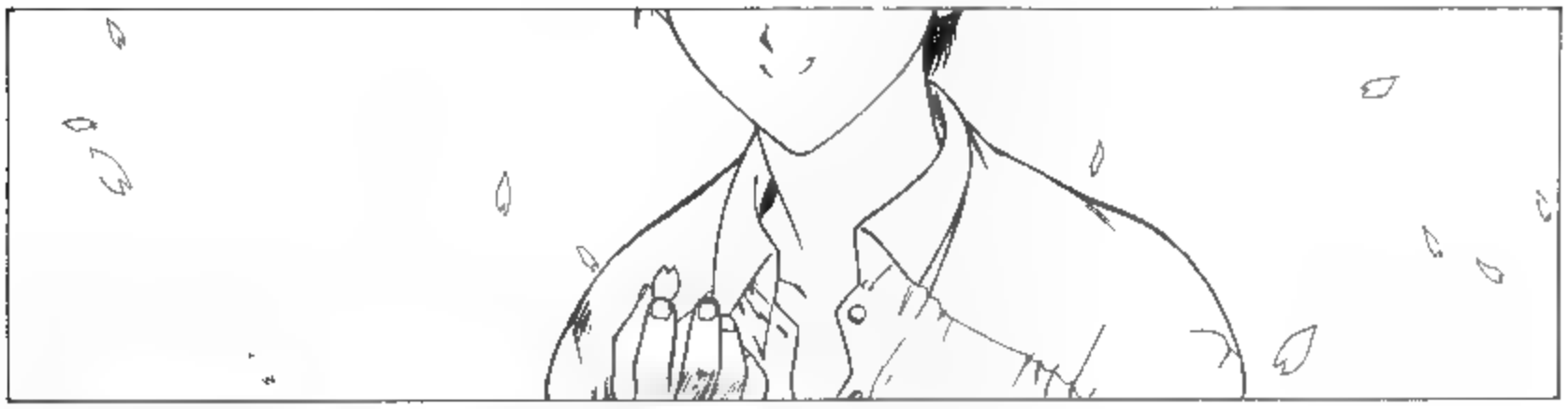
TELL ME! TELL ME!

WHAT ARE THESE FLOWERS CALLED, AGAIN?

MMM?

DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

THEY'RE CALLED CHERRY BLOSSOMS, HONEY.



AND
SO...

...WITH THAT
SINGLE SMILE
OF HIS...
...I BECAME...
THE ME I AM.

SHE'S HEADED THAT WAY! STOP HER!

WE CAN'T LET HER GET OUT! AUTOLOCK ALL DOORS, NOW!

CALL IN ALL STAFF FROM THE OTHER SECTIONS! HURRY!

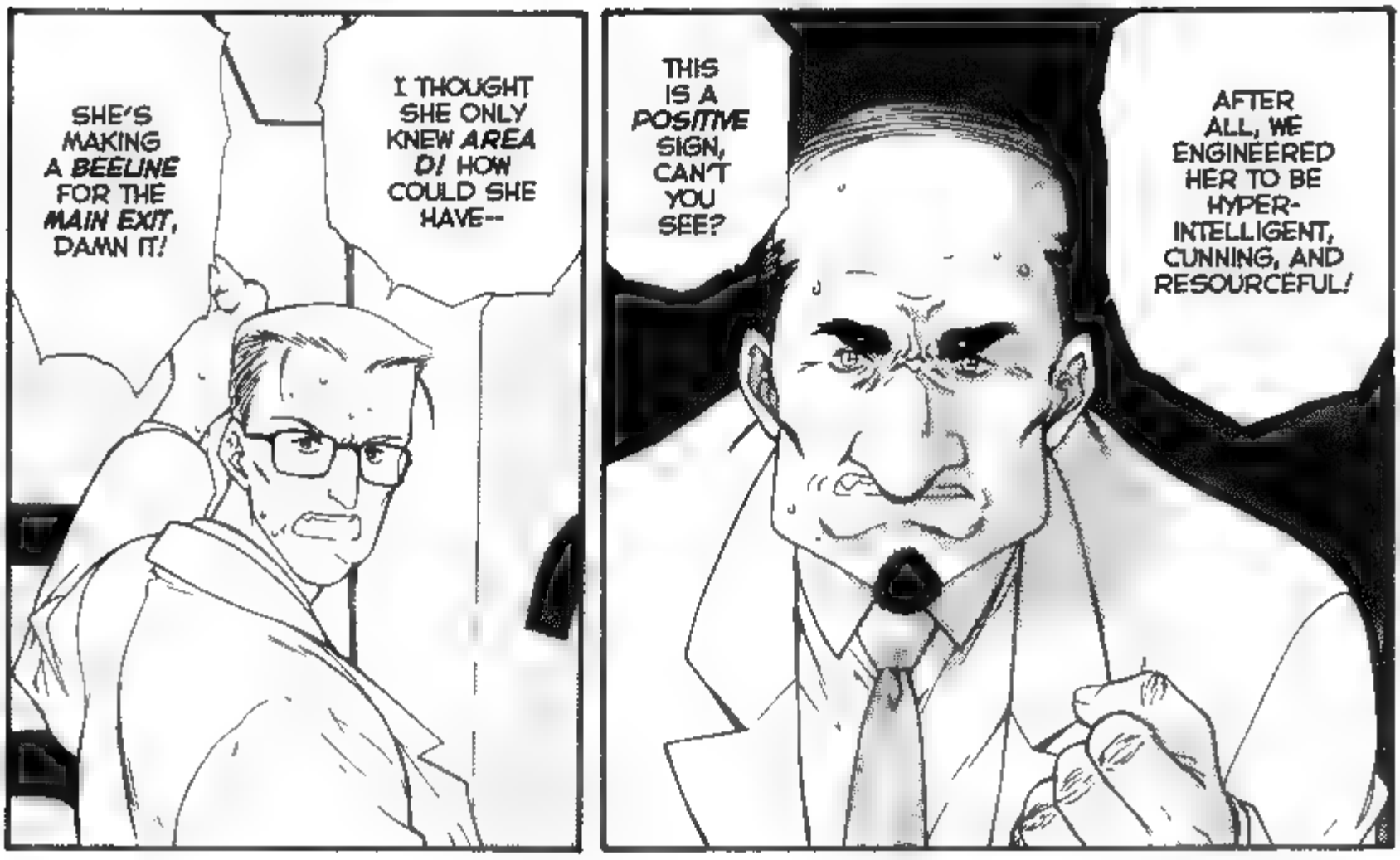
WHH

SHH

CRASH!

HAP

SECURITY...
HUHH ...
OPEN DOOR...
B-2...
HFF


SHE'S MAKING A BEELINE FOR THE MAIN EXIT, DAMN IT!
I THOUGHT SHE ONLY KNEW AREA D! HOW COULD SHE HAVE--
THIS IS A POSITIVE SIGN, CAN'T YOU SEE?
AFTER ALL, WE ENGINEERED HER TO BE HYPER-INTELLIGENT, CUNNING, AND RESOURCEFUL!

"AND NOW IT SEEMS CLEAR..."

I HATE IT!

I HATE IT!

I HATE IT!

I HATE IT!

I HATE THIS PLACE!

"...THAT WE'VE SUC-CEEDED!"

HUH...?

THUMP

WHAT ARE *CHILDREN* DOING IN THIS SECTION...?

I HATE THE NEEDLES!

YEAH... *STRANGE.*

I HATE THE TESTS!

I HATE THE DOCTORS!

I HATE ALL OF YOU!!

OH--?!

FWP

I'VE FOUND IT!

THE MAIN EXIT!

THERE SHE IS! STOP HER!

STUMBLING... NO...!

NOT NOW... NOT WHEN I'M...

AH--!

THARP

VREEE

PSHTT

DREEP

PSHTT

....SO CLOSE!

THE OUTSIDE...? I...I'VE NEVER EVEN SEEN IT BEFORE...

FWHDD

EEK!

WHNP

I'LL NEVER FORGET THOSE EYES...

H-HEY?! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...?

OW...!

...THOSE EYES. FULL OF CONFUSION... FEW AS
LOOKING AT ME AS IF I WERE A MONSTER OR SOMETHING
SO, YOU REALLY DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING? YOU'RE SURE YOU'RE NOT HURT...?

THE WAY THEY LOOK AT ME

Act 21

YES... UNTIL THAT MOMENT...

...NO ONE HAD EVEN ■CKNOWLEDGED THAT I WAS HUMAN... NO ONE...

ARE YOU OKAY...?

NO SCRATCHES, I HOPE...!

AH, YOUR NOSE IS A BIT RED... SORRY...!

BUT WHEN YOU JUST DASH ABOUT LIKE THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS IS BOUND TO HAPPEN...

AH..
..AH..
..HUH..
..HELP..

YOU THERE! YOUNG MAN! GRAB THAT GIRL, WILL YOU?

HUH?

HUNH. *THIS* ONE'S GIVEN US MORE THAN HER SHARE OF *TROUBLE,* HASN'T SHE...

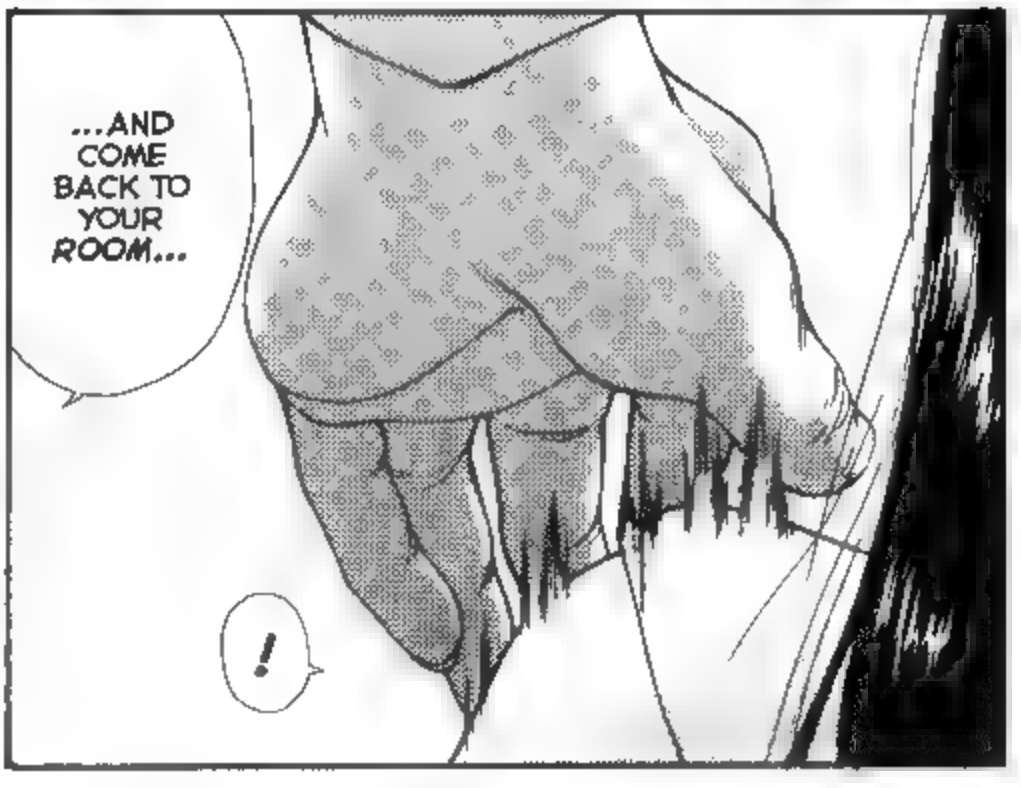
D

N-NO...

...LEAVE ME ALONE...

...DON'T...

THERE, NOW. BE A GOOD GIRL, WON'T YOU...


...AND COME BACK TO YOUR ROOM...
!

AH--!
WOOZ
--!!

WH... WHAT'S WRONG...?
SOBB

DAMN IT! YOU LITTLE MONSTER...!

COME HERE, DAMN YOU! NOW!

NO--!

THAPP

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? SHE'S JUST A LITTLE GIRL!

WHSHH

THAT'S NO WAY TO TREAT A CHILD--!

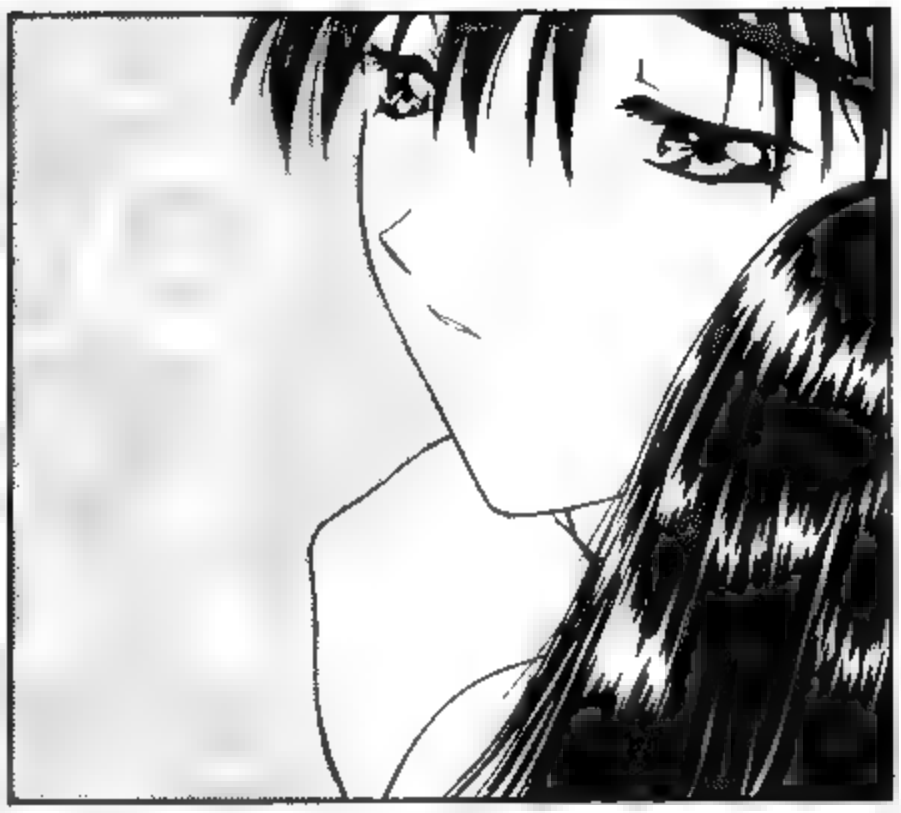
AND WHO THE HELL ARE YOU, KID?

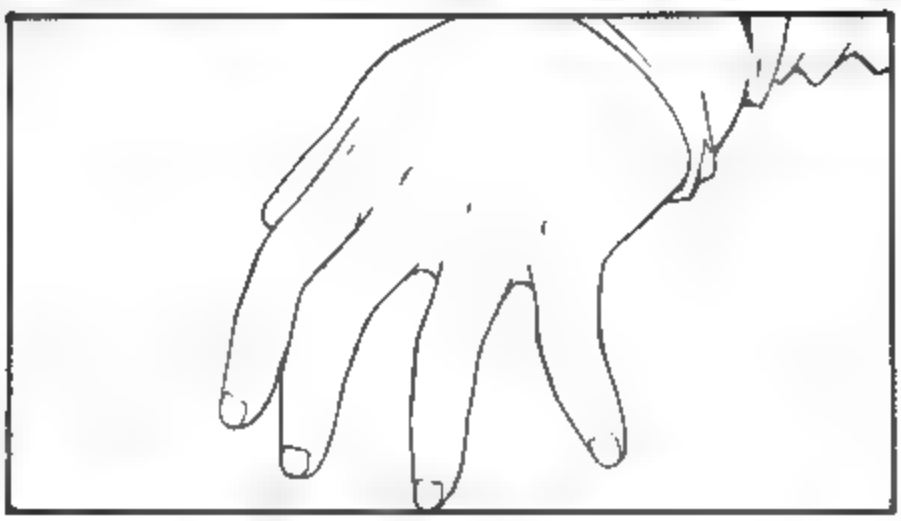
I ADVISE YOU TO MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS--
STOP IT, OWEN!
EVERY-ONE'S WATCHING, UNDER-STAND...?

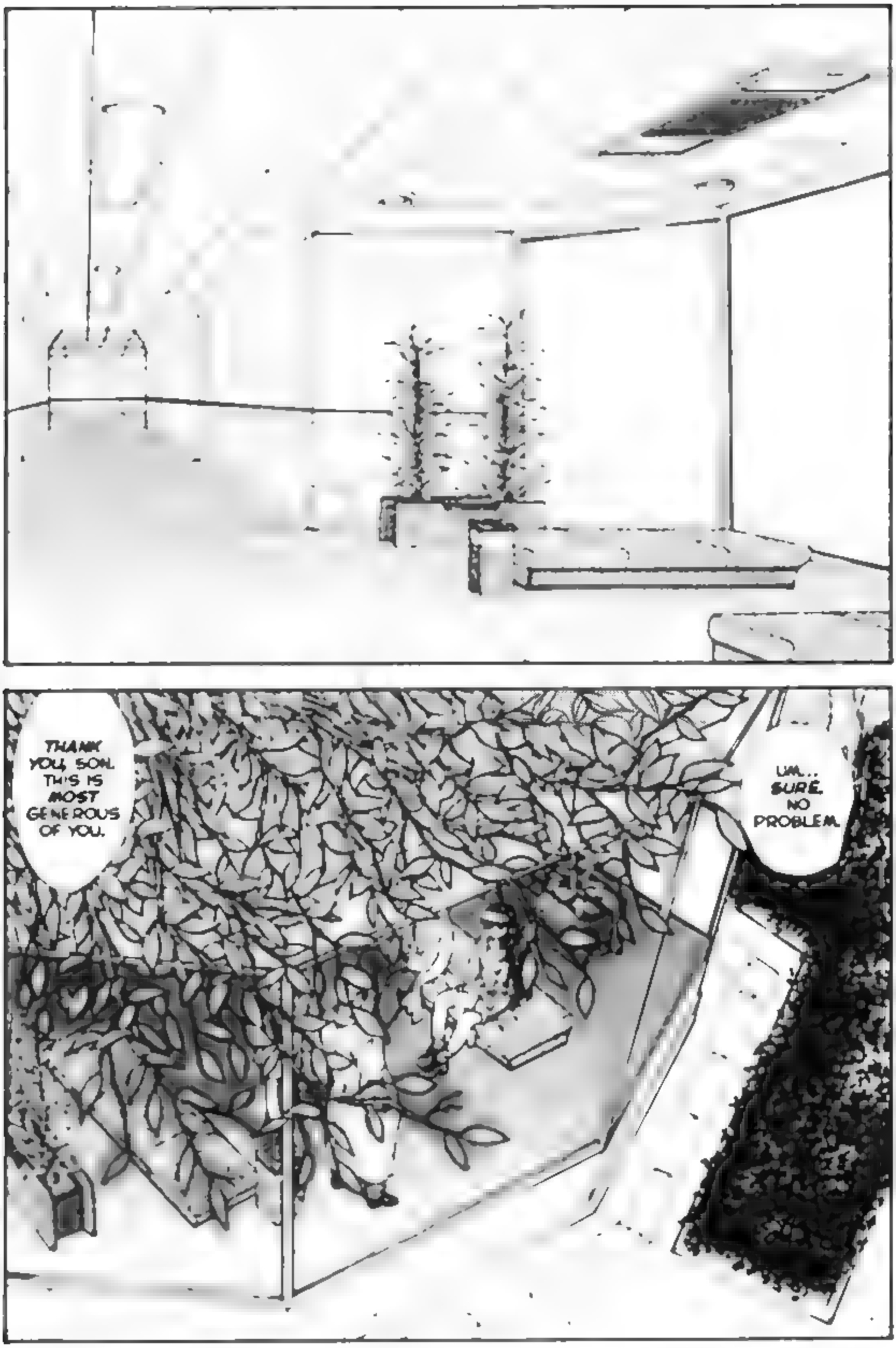
SORRY TO *INCONVENIENCE* YOU, YOUNG MAN... BUT CAN YOU *SPARE* US A FEW MINUTES OF YOUR TIME?

UH... *PARDON...?* BUT... I'M *ALREADY* LATE FOR MY *APPOINTMENT,* AND...

SHIKK






THANK YOU, SON. THIS IS MOST GENEROUS OF YOU.
UM... SURE. NO PROBLEM.

SO, YOUNG MAN....

...WHAT BRINGS YOU TO OUR *FACILITY?*

ARE YOU WITH THE *DONOR PROGRAM,* PERHAPS?

UM... *NO,* SIR. ACTUALLY, I'M...

SIR, THIS BOY APPEARS TO BE AN *ESPER* TEST SUBJECT WITH *SECTION E.*

AH. AN *ESPER,* IS HE...?

PSYCHO-KINESIS LEVEL: C-PLUS.

HIS NAME IS OUMI... SUNAO OUMI. LET'S SEE... HIS FAMILY IS...OH.

YES...?

AH...MY MOTHER DIED AFTER GIVING BIRTH...

...AND MY FATHER JUST... PASSED AWAY... A FEW WEEKS AGO. AN ACCIDENT...

...SO I DON'T HAVE ANY CLOSE RELATIVES LEFT. ALL ALONE IN THE WORLD, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

WELL... SUNAO, IS IT? LISTEN.

THE FACT IS, THIS GIRL LOST *HER* PARENTS, TOO. SO SHE'S A BIT... ***EMOTIONAL,*** YOU SEE. ***UNDER-STANDABLE,*** I SUPPOSE.

SHE JUST WON'T ***OPEN UP*** TO US, AS YOU'VE SEEN FOR YOURSELF...!

SINCE SHE'S ***HERE*** AT THIS FACILITY, AS ***YOU*** ARE, YOU CAN IMAGINE THAT SHE'S, AH... ***SPECIAL?***

AND OF ***COURSE,*** SHE DOESN'T ***LIKE*** US.

ALL THOSE ***TESTS*** AND ***EXPERIMENTS*** WE HAVE TO RUN ON HER, DAY AFTER DAY...DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS, THE EXPERIENCE NO DOUBT REMAINS... ***UNPLEASANT.***

SO. TO THE *POINT...*

WHAP

...WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO TAKE OVER THE CHILD'S *EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT,* YOU SEE.

AND IT WOULD SEEM THAT SHE'S TAKEN A SHINE TO *YOU,* SUNAO.

SO WE WERE WONDERING IF, JUST FOR THE TIME YOU'RE *ASSIGNED* HERE, YOU COULD BE HER *OPERATOR--*

--AH, I MEAN, BE A *BIG BROTHER* TO HER?

HUH?

ME? BUT *WHY?*

YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON THE CHILD HAS *EVER* CLUNG TO LIKE THIS, SUNAO.

I'LL CLEAR IT WITH YOUR *SECTION*, DON'T WORRY. SO CAN *WE COUNT* ON YOU? FOR *HER* GOOD?

BUT... BUT I'M NOT...

YES, WE WERE BOTH ORPHANS, BUT IT WASN'T MERELY THAT...

I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE THOSE EYES...THE FIRST EYES THAT EVER SAW ME AS I AM...

...THE FIRST ARM I COULD CLING TO WITH ALL MY HEART...!

I DIDN'T WANT TO LET YOU GO...

COME TO THINK OF IT, I'VE SEEN EYES LIKE HERS BEFORE... CLINGING, BEGGING... VULNERABLE...

THE EYES OF THAT PUPPY I FOUND, THE ONE MY FATHER WOULDN'T LET ME KEEP...

...SO INNOCENT AND TRUSTING AND HELPLESS...

UM, *EXCUSE ME,* BUT...

WHAT'S THIS GIRL'S *NAME?*

...HER *NAME?*

NAME...? WELL, HER SUBJECT DESIGNATION IS "*A*"... BUT, AH...

Y-YES, THAT'S RIGHT...

...WHICH IS OF *COURSE* SHORT FOR... UH, SHORT FOR...*ALICE!* YES!

HER NAME IS *ALICE,* OF COURSE.

SO. YOU'RE *ALICE*, HUH?

WELL, I'M *SUNAO.*

NICE TO *MEET* YOU, ALICE.

ALICE...? NOW I HAVE A NAME...

...ALICE...

NOT *"SUBJECT A,"* ANYMORE... BUT *ALICE.* A NAME...THE GREATEST PRESENT OF ALL, THE THING I NEEDED MOST TO BECOME *MYSELF.*

I WAS SO HAPPY.

BECAUSE NOT ONLY DID I HAVE A NAME, BUT NOW THERE WAS SOMEONE IN THE WORLD TO CALL ME BY IT.

AND FROM THAT MOMENT ON...

...*A* BECAME *"ALICE"*...

BUT NOW...

...I'M NO LONGER ALICE.

I'M ATTIM M-ZAK... AND... AND HE HAS NO IDEA WHO I AM...OR WHO I WAS...

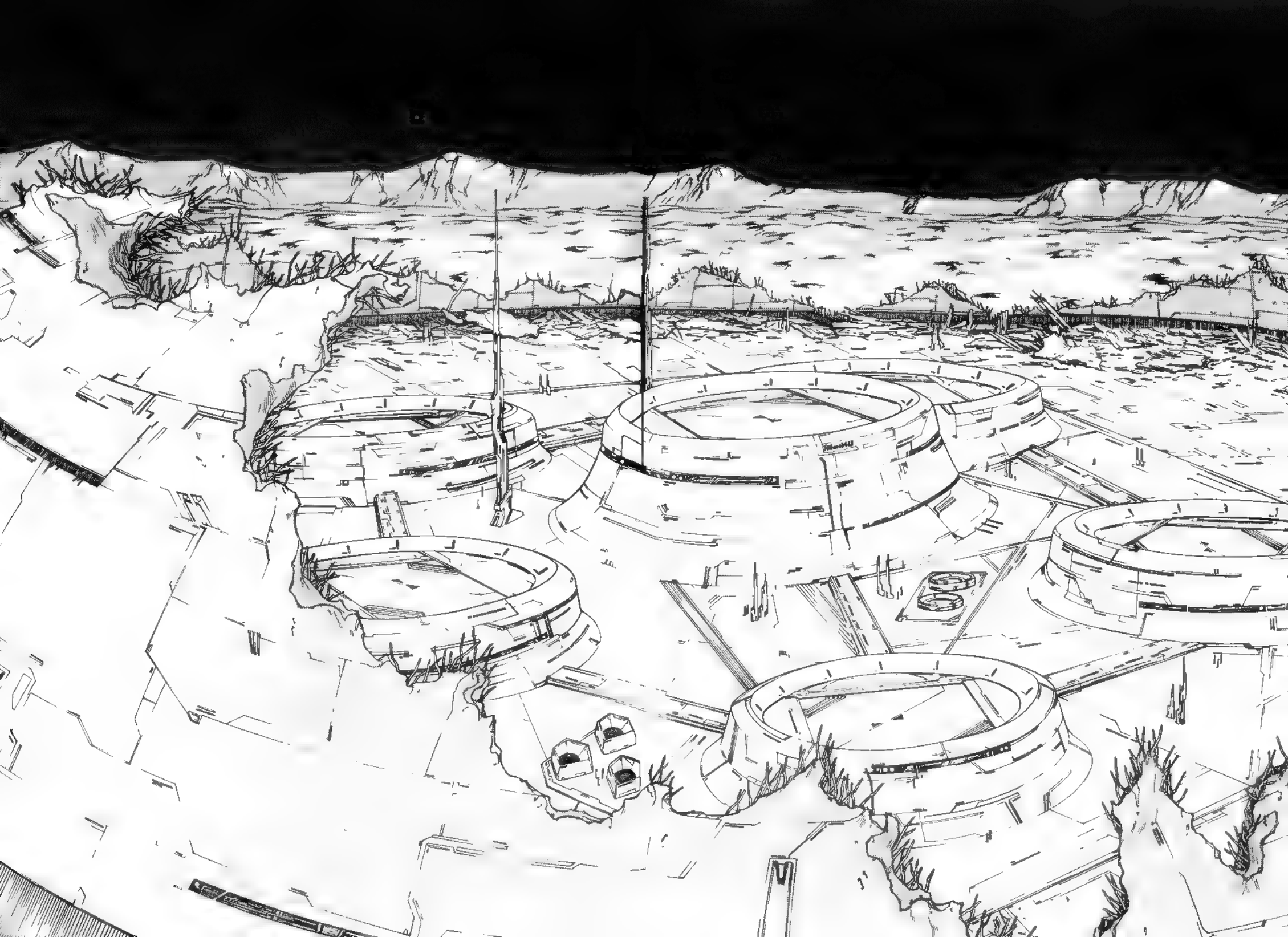
WHY...?

WHY AM I THINKING ABOUT THIS NOW...NOW, OF ALL TIMES...?

S-SUNAO...

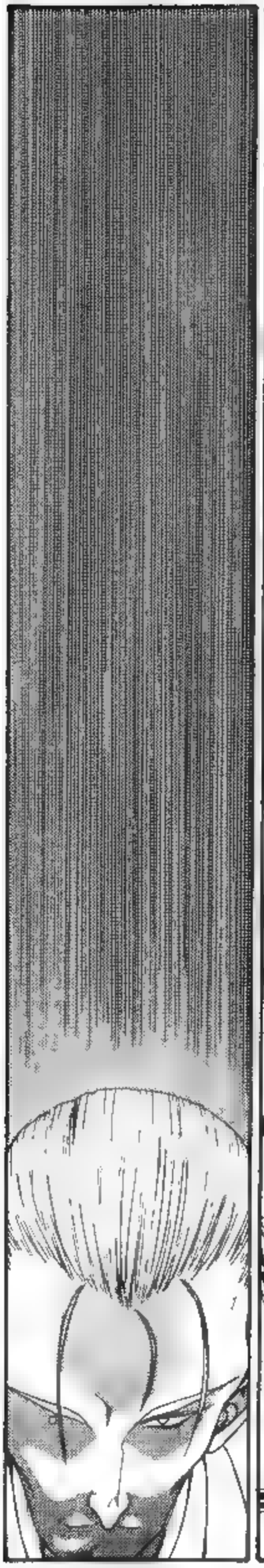
...MY ...MY "BIG BROTHER" ...

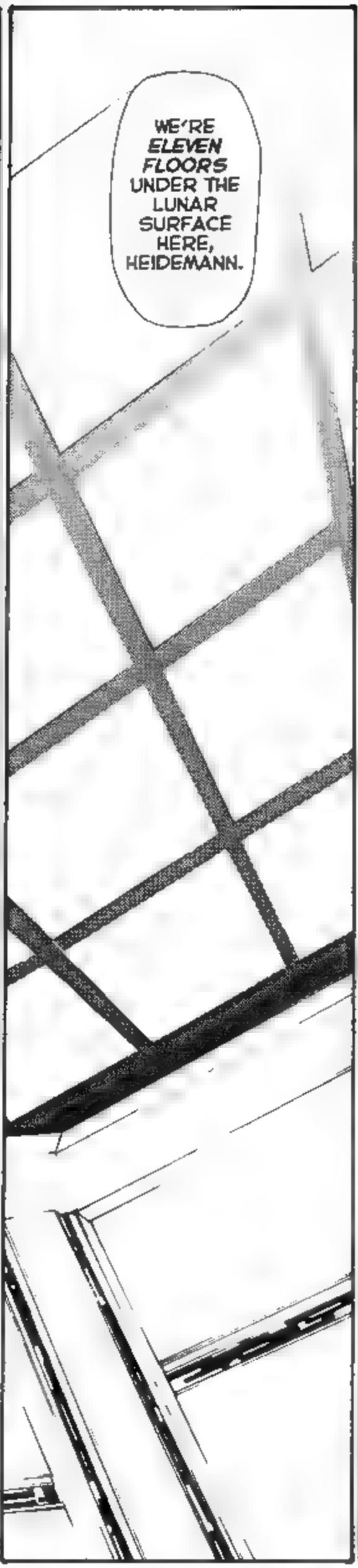
Act 22



KRAAK
HRAAAA
KRAK
MMM
MMM
KCHIK
ZZZP

WHATEVER ARE YOU TRYING TO DO, MR. HAYWARD...?
HFF




WE'RE *ELEVEN FLOORS* UNDER THE LUNAR SURFACE HERE, HEIDEMANN.

NOT IN SOME FRAGILE *DOME* YOU CAN BREACH TO TRY AND *ASPHYXIATE* ME, LIKE LAST TIME...!

AND SO...?

HEH... GOT A NEW APPROACH, THIS TIME.

MAYBE YOU CAN STOP BULLETS, HEIDEMANN...

...!!!

ZZZ

HEAAA!
WHOOSH
FSHOOM
WUSHH

YORP

:HKK:

:HLKK:

WH... WHAT...?

TAK TAK

THMP

SPLIPP

SPLIPP

I...I DON'T... QUITE...

...UNDERSTAND...

:

SPLOCH

IN TERMS OF *SPEED* AND *TIMING*, BULLETS MIGHT HAVE BEEN A *BETTER* CHOICE...

...BUT AS FOR SHEER *DESTRUCTIVENESS*, I'D HAVE TO SAY THIS *"NEW APPROACH"* OF YOURS *DOES* HAVE ITS MERITS, MR. HAYWARD.

W-WELL... GUESS YOU'VE HAD A *HEAD START* ON MASTERING THESE *PSYCHO-KINETIC TRICKS,* HUH...?

THE OCCASIONAL *INSOUCIANT REMARK* I COULD LET *PASS,* RIX...

...BUT WHEN A DOG *TRULY* BITES ITS *MASTER'S HAND...*

...IT NEEDS TO BE *DISCIPLINED,* WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

W-WHAT?!

GUAH!
WHOOSH
THNKK
WHAP

FWAP

SKKK

NNGH

GLKK

I'M *DIS-APPOINTED* IN YOU, MR. HAYWARD.

I HAD SOMEHOW THOUGHT YOU TO BE A MORE *PERCEPTIVE* INDIVIDUAL...!

THUMPP

THUMPP

DID YOU *REALLY* THINK THAT YOUR TARGETS WOULD JUST BE WANDERING SO *NONCHALANTLY* ABOUT TOWN, WITH A PAIR OF *UNSPEAKABLY* VALUABLE *EMBLEM SEEDS* IN HAND?

?!

*"OF COURSE THOSE WEREN'T GENUINE EMBLEM SEEDS YOU FILCHED FROM THEM...

*"...BUT ALL THAT I REALLY **REQUIRED** TO BE DONE WAS TO **SEPARATE** THAT GIRL FROM HER **U.N. INVESTIGATOR** GUARDIAN."*

HEIDEMANN... Y-YOU *BASTARD...*

I... I WAS... YOUR *DECOY...?* :GLKK:

I *DISLIKE* HAVING MY SUBTLE MACHINATIONS SUMMED UP SO *BLUNTLY*, BUT...*YES*, MR. HAYWARD.

BY DRAWING THE "*SCARLET ANGEL*" AWAY, YOU *DID* ACHIEVE MY PRIMARY OBJECTIVE. I'M QUITE *GRATEFUL*, IN FACT...IF NOT PERHAPS EVEN *GENEROUS*.

VWWM

IN LIGHT OF YOUR EARLIER DISPLAY, I'VE NOTED THAT YOU'RE CLEARLY FOND OF *PSYCHOKINETIC FIREWORKS* SUCH AS THIS.

SO, HERE'S A *PRESENT* FOR YOU, RIX, TO SHOW MY *GRATITUDE*.

CATCH.

ZZZK

FSHHT

!!
ZZZK
AAA
A
SHHH
CKREEK
THWP

VREEE
VREEE

SPLOOSH

SHRPP
SHRAKK

WOW

AH. I SEE...

THUNK

SHINK!

...YOU ATTEMPTED TO *PARTIALLY ABSORB* MY ATTACK INTO YOURSELF, *SUBSUMING* THE ENERGIES AS IF THEY WERE YOUR *OWN*...

...THOUGH *NOT* WITHOUT COST TO YOURSELF, I SENSE.

A *FINE* EFFORT, REALLY.

YOU'RE CERTAINLY A *LIVELY* ONE, MR. HAYWARD... I SUSPECT I'LL BE HEARING FROM YOU AGAIN.

BREEP

BREEP

A-APEP—! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

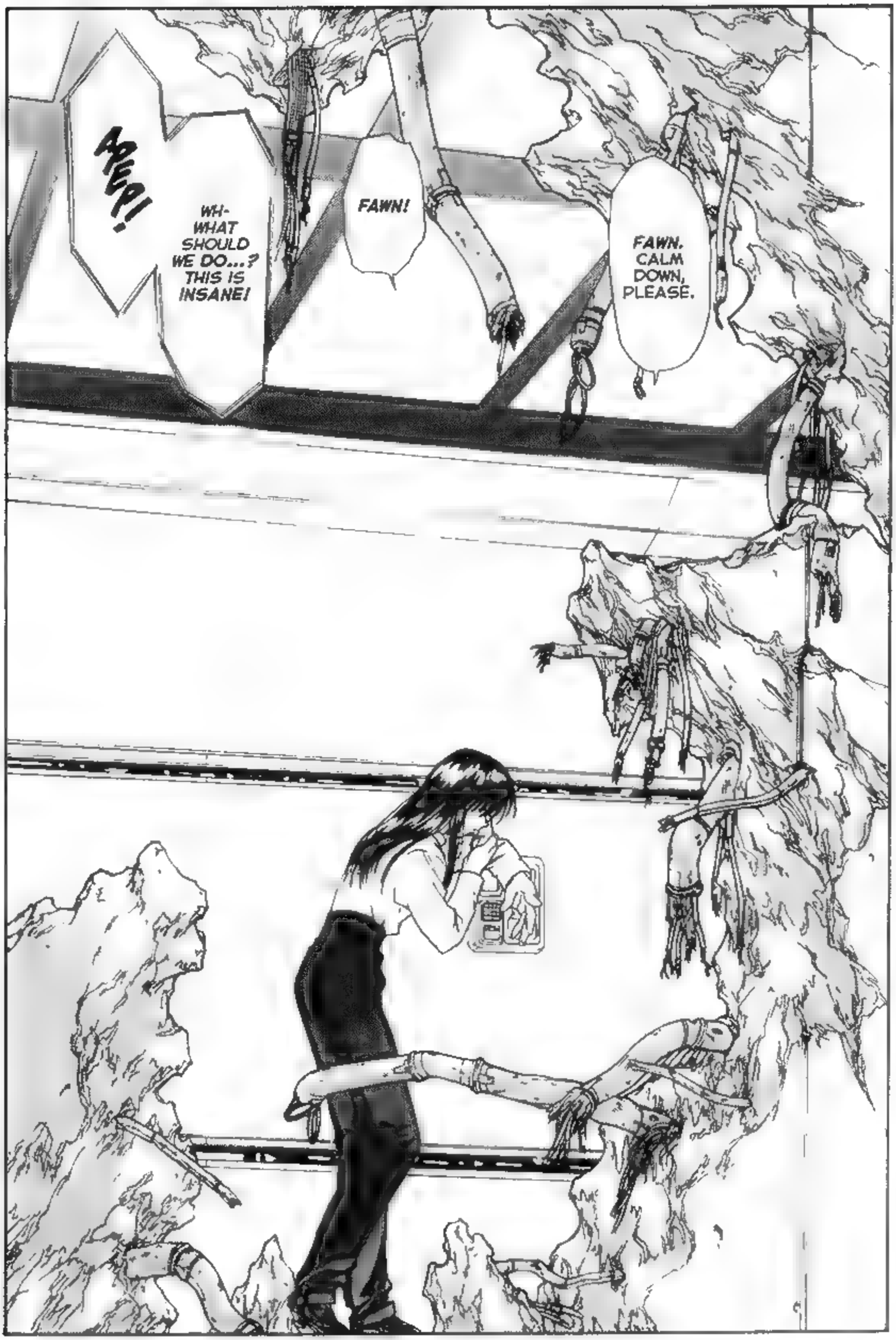
YES, FAWN. IS SOMETHING AMISS...?

OH, APEP... I MEAN, ACTING DIRECTOR, SIR!

IT...IT'S HORRIBLE!

A SQUAD OF U.N. INVESTIGATORS... THEY'VE BROKEN INTO THE FACILITY...!

Act 23


AHEP!
WH-WHAT SHOULD WE DO...? THIS IS INSANE!
FAWN!
FAWN. CALM DOWN, PLEASE.

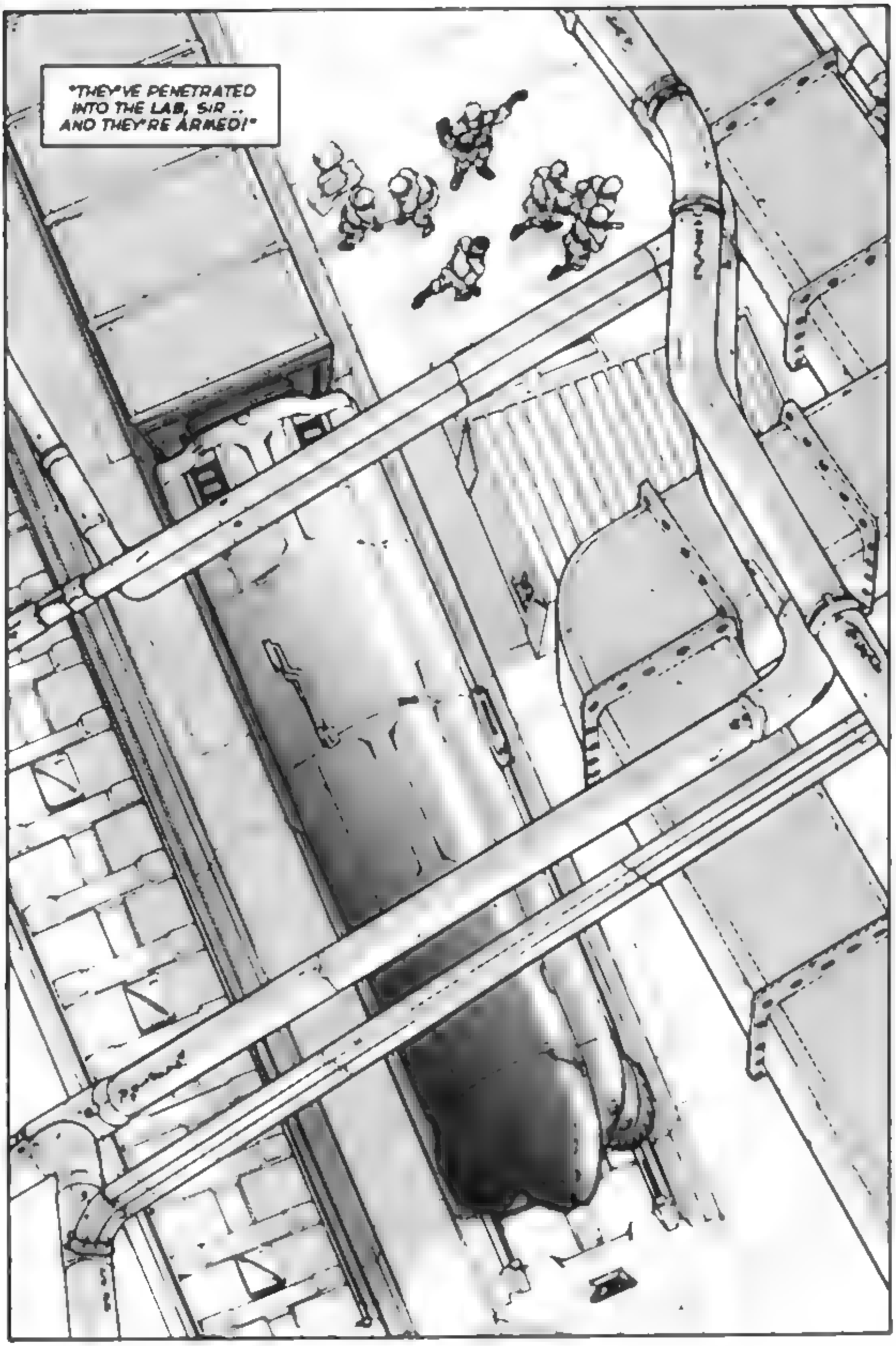
NOW, EXPLAIN TO ME *WHAT'S HAPPENED,* FAWN... SLOWLY AND CLEARLY.

THAT'S RIGHT... TAKE A *DEEP BREATH...*

Y-YES, SIR...!

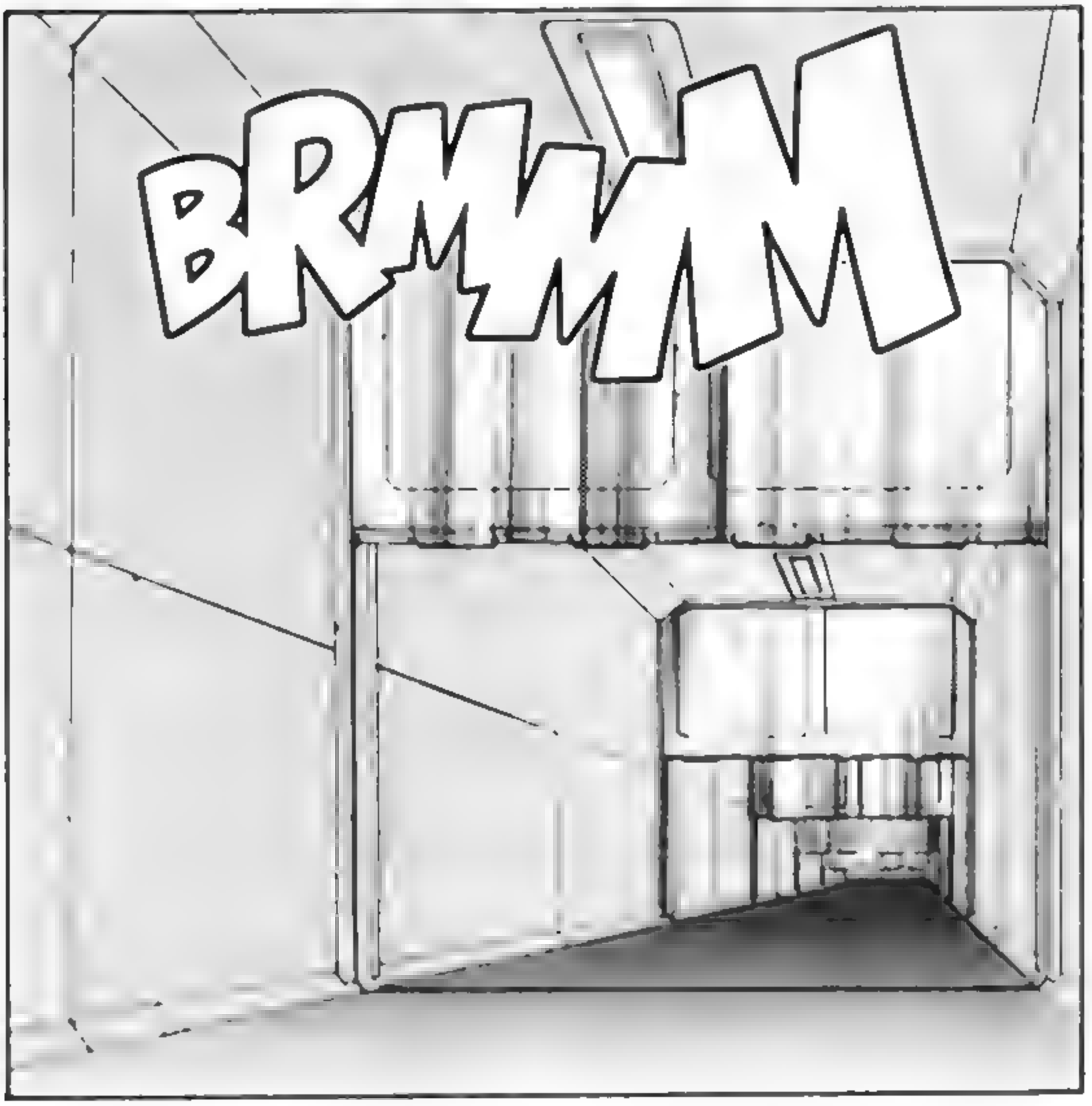
YES, *ACTING DIRECTOR,* SIR.

ONLY *MINUTES* AGO, SIR, OUR SECURITY CAMERAS DETECTED A TEAM OF *U.N. INVESTI-GATORS* ENTERING THE FACILITY, DEPLOYING FROM A REGULARLY SCHEDULED *SUPPLY TRAIN...!* THEY'RE IN OUR CARGO TRANSFER BAY NOW, AND...*OH!*


"THEY'VE PENETRATED INTO THE LAB, SIR .. AND THEY'RE ARMED!"

KLMPP
KLMPP
KLMPP

THWARP
THWARP
THWARP


BRAM

FWSSH

KLANGG

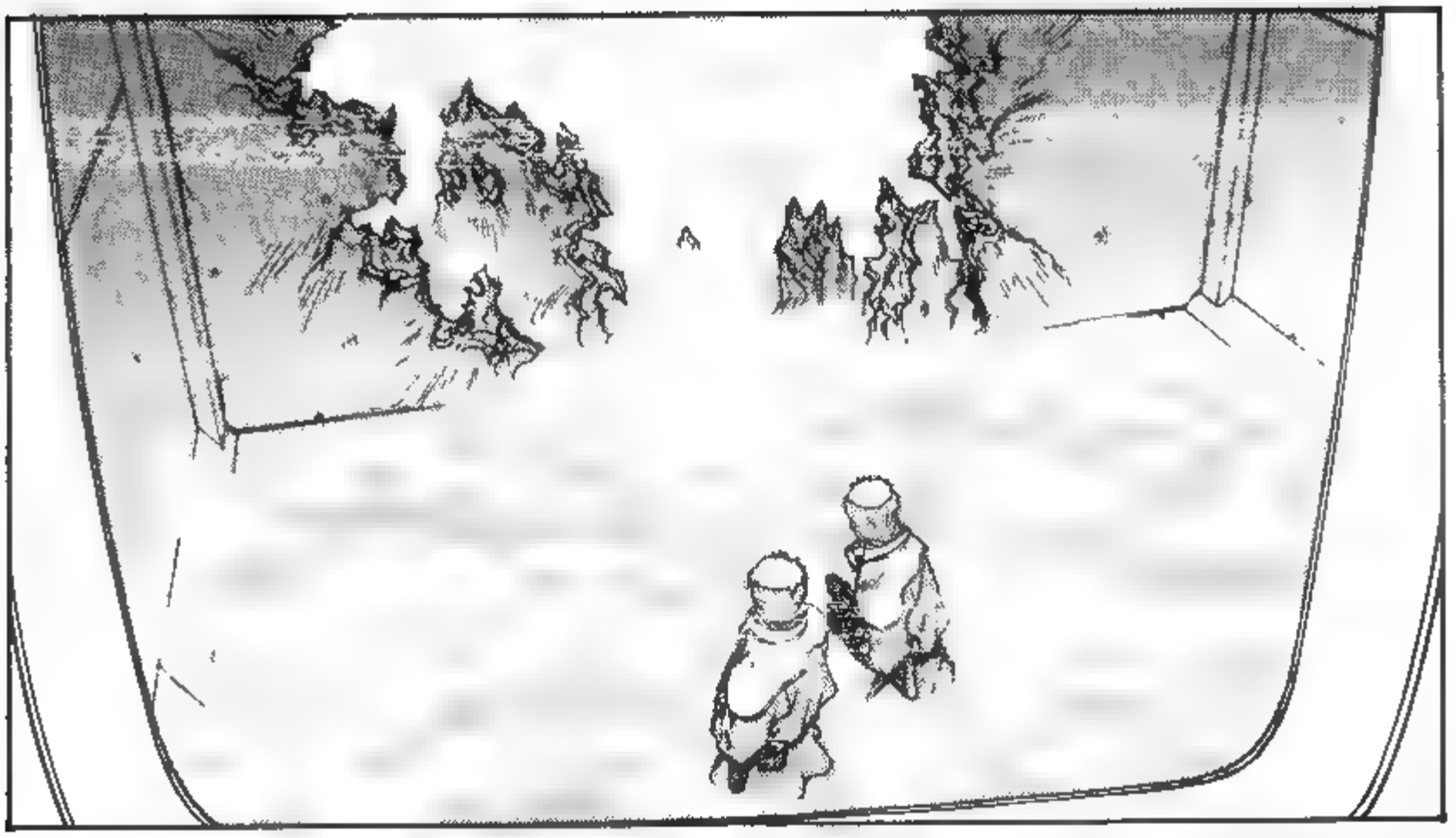
THNKK

APEP, THE *SECURITY SYSTEM'S* ACTIVATING... THE *BULKHEADS* ARE AUTO-MATICALLY CLOSING...

OH, NO--!

KCHAK

CHOOM
CHOOM
CHOOM
FSHHH



EEEK!!
TH-THEY *BLEW* THE DOOR! ARE THEY *CRAZY*--?
N-NO... THIS CAN'T BE *HAPPEN-ING!*

S-SIR! WHAT'S GOING ON...?

WHY ARE THEY ATTACKING US, SIR..?

HOW THE HELL SHOULD I KNOW?

GO ASK THEM YOUR-SELF...!

OH... OH MY GOD... ARE THEY GOING TO KILL US?

N-NO...! OH, PLEASE, NO... NOOOO--!

FAWN.

FAWN!

OH...! AH, YES, SIR...?

I BELIEVE I UNDER-STAND WHAT'S HAPPENED.

NOW IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT WE REASSURE OUR PERSONNEL...

...SO PATCH ME INTO THE MONITORS, PLEASE, ON A FACILITY-WIDE VIDEO FEED.

YES, SIR!

TAKKA TAK

HMM...

I'M IMPRESSED THAT THE U.N.'S *INVESTIGATORS* HAVE RESPONDED SO *QUICKLY*...

...AND SO *FORCEFULLY*, IT WOULD APPEAR...!

ALL FACILITY PERSONNEL... MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE?
I AM APEP HEIDE-MANN...
...ACTING DIRECTOR OF THIS PROJECT.

PLEASE STAY CALM AND LISTEN TO ME...THEN FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LETTER, PLEASE.

THE UNPLEASANT SIGHT THAT YOU'VE BEEN WITNESSING ON THE MONITORS...

...IS, IN FACT, A COVERT AND ALMOST CERTAINLY ILLEGAL RAID...

... BY THE UNITED NATIONS' INFAMOUS ARMED INVESTI-GATORS!

WITH CUSTOMARY **CRUDENESS**, THEY'VE CHOSEN TO TRAMPLE OUR LABORATORY UNDER THEIR **JACKBOOTS** WITHOUT SO MUCH AS PRESENTING A **SEARCH WARRANT** TO MYSELF, THE SENIOR OFFICIAL PRESENT.

THEIR PRECISE ***OBJECTIVE*** REMAINS, ALAS, UNCLEAR. ***HOWEVER,*** LET ME ***REASSURE*** YOU THAT MR. HAYWARD AND HIS COLLEAGUES FROM ***DYKSTRA SECURITY*** ARE CONSULTING WITH ME RIGHT NOW, AND I WILL ***DEAL*** WITH THIS ***INTRUSION*** WITH THEIR ASSISTANCE, WHILE RESPECTING THE WISHES OF OUR ***DYKSTRA CORPORATION*** BENEFACTORS.

IN THE ***MEAN-TIME...***

...I WANT YOU ALL TO PROCEED TO THE ***SHUTTLE DECK,*** AND EVACUATE THE FACILITY IN A ***CALM*** AND ***ORDERLY*** FASHION.

AAAA

AAAA

THMP

THMP

THMP

FWIP!

BIN!

OUTTA MY WAY, SPAWN IT!

WELL...THAT TAKES CARE OF THAT. I DO, HOWEVER, NEED TO RETRIEVE SOME DATA BEFORE WE EVACUATE...

SO WILL YOU WAIT FOR ME, FAWN? IN MY OFFICE?

HUH? B-BUT, APEP...

EXCELLENT. I'LL SEE YOU SHORTLY, FAWN.

SNAP
BWEEE

UMMM
ZZZSH

AH.

SO THAT'S THE NOTORIOUS SCARLET ANGEL, EH?

HMM...

SUCH ANGRY EYES... FOR AN ANGEL...

GET DOWN THOSE STAIRS, [illegible] THE LAB'S ALARM *FRAME* IS ON THE BOTTOM FLOOR!

[illegible] I DIE [illegible]

THIS LIGHT [illegible]

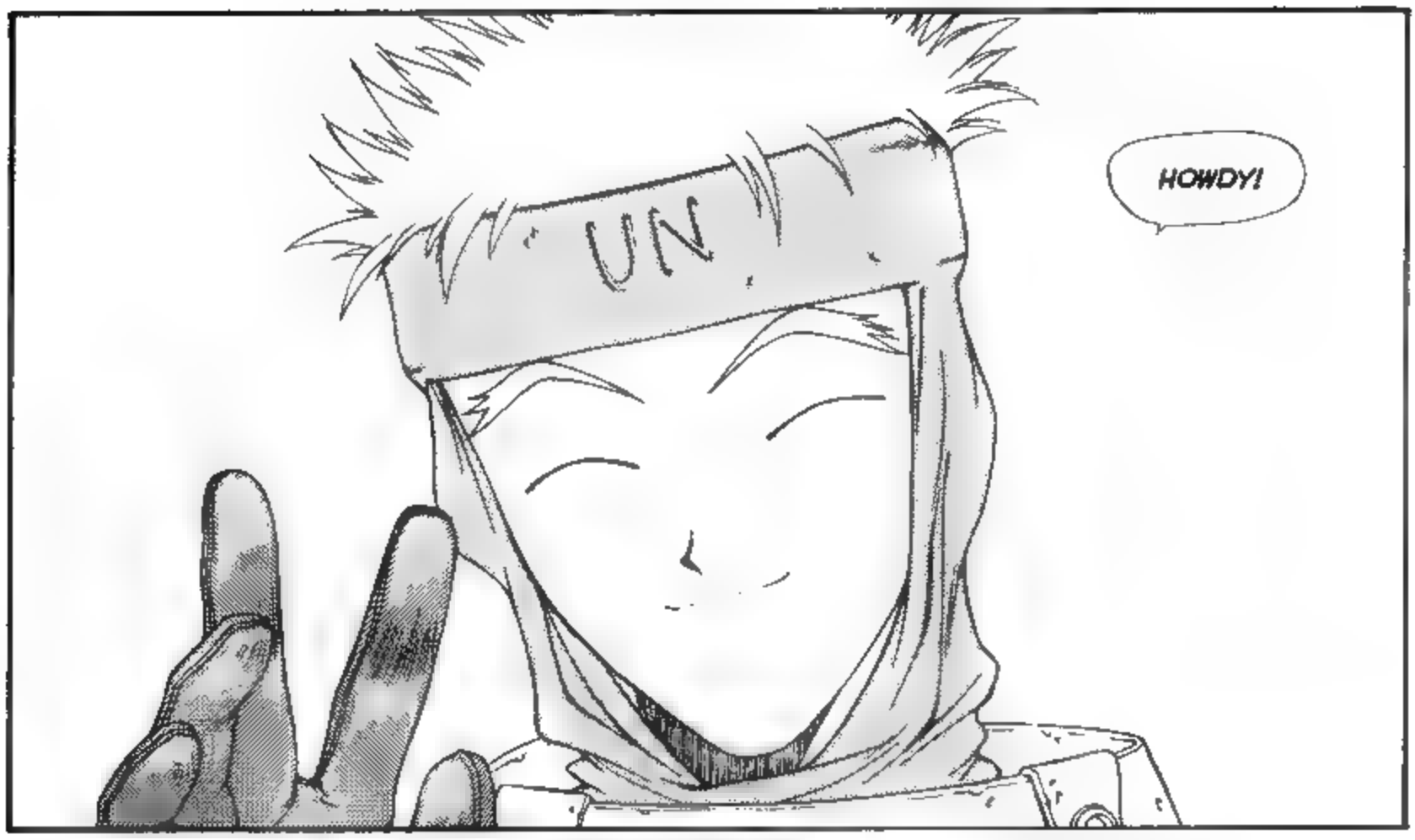
OH CALCIFER'S HAIRY ASS THIS JAR TOO TIGHT

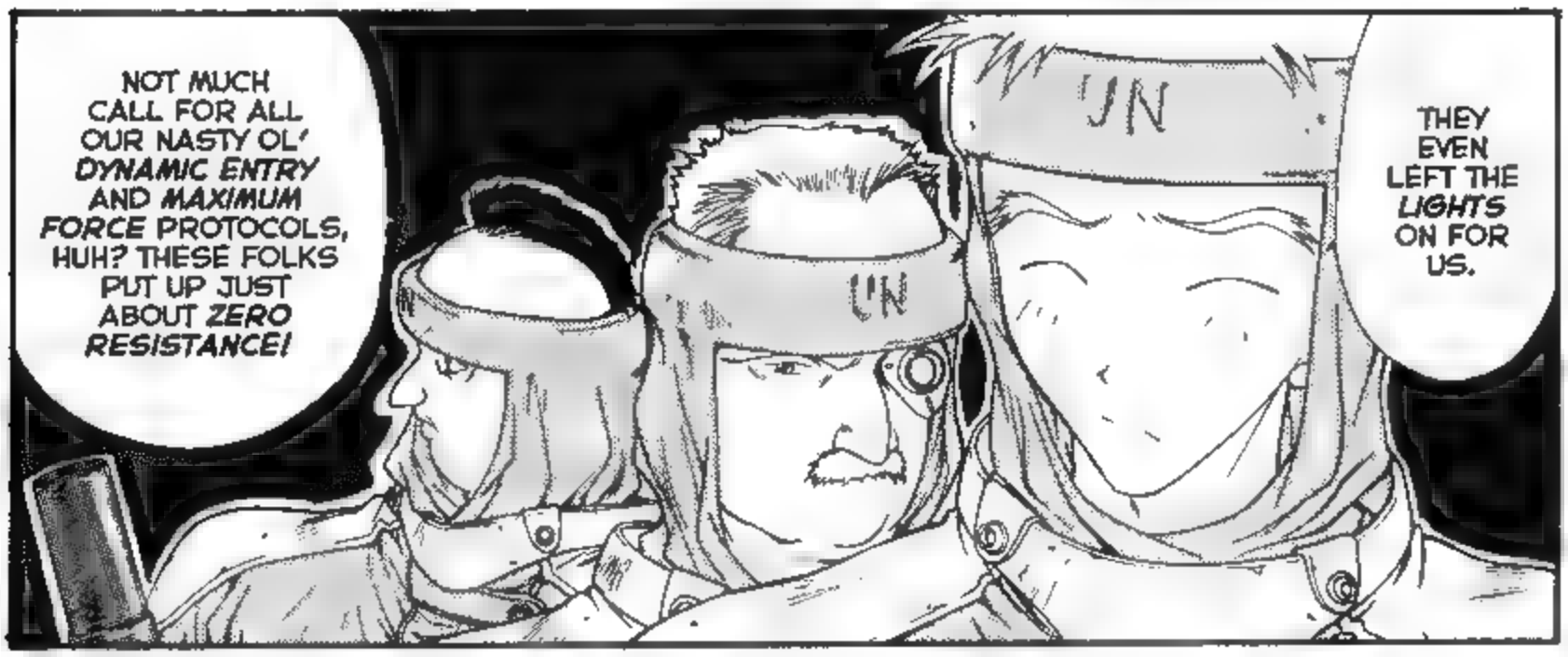
MAYBE THIS IS JUST A **RESEARCH** FACILITY. BUT WITH THOSE **DYKSTRA** BASTARDS BEHIND IT...

...THEY **CAN'T** HAVE INSTALLED SUCH **NEGLIGIBLE** SECURITY...

SMELLS LIKE A *TRAP*, DON'CHA THINK?

!


UN
HOWDY!


NOT MUCH CALL FOR ALL OUR NASTY OL' *DYNAMIC ENTRY* AND *MAXIMUM FORCE* PROTOCOLS, HUH? THESE FOLKS PUT UP JUST ABOUT *ZERO RESISTANCE!*
UN
UN
THEY EVEN LEFT THE *LIGHTS* ON FOR US.

IT'S LIKE THEY'RE *INVITING* US DOWNSTAIRS, OR SOME-THING...
WHA'CHA *THINK*, MISS M-ZAK?
WHY ARE YOU *FOLLOWING* ME?

I SAID, WHY ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME...?

HUH?

UN

WHY?

UN

'CAUSE OL' LEN FEELS SAFER WITH THE TOUGHEST KID ON THE BLOCK, THAT'S WHY! AN' BESIDES...

...FOLLOWING YOU MAKES FOR A NICE VIEW, DON'T IT? ♥

KRAK

OW!

YEE-OW...!

GEEZ!

I AM *PROGRAMMED* TO HEAD STRAIGHT INTO *HARM'S WAY!* DOES *THAT* MAKE YOU FEEL *SAFER...?*

WELL? *DOES* IT?

THMPP

UN

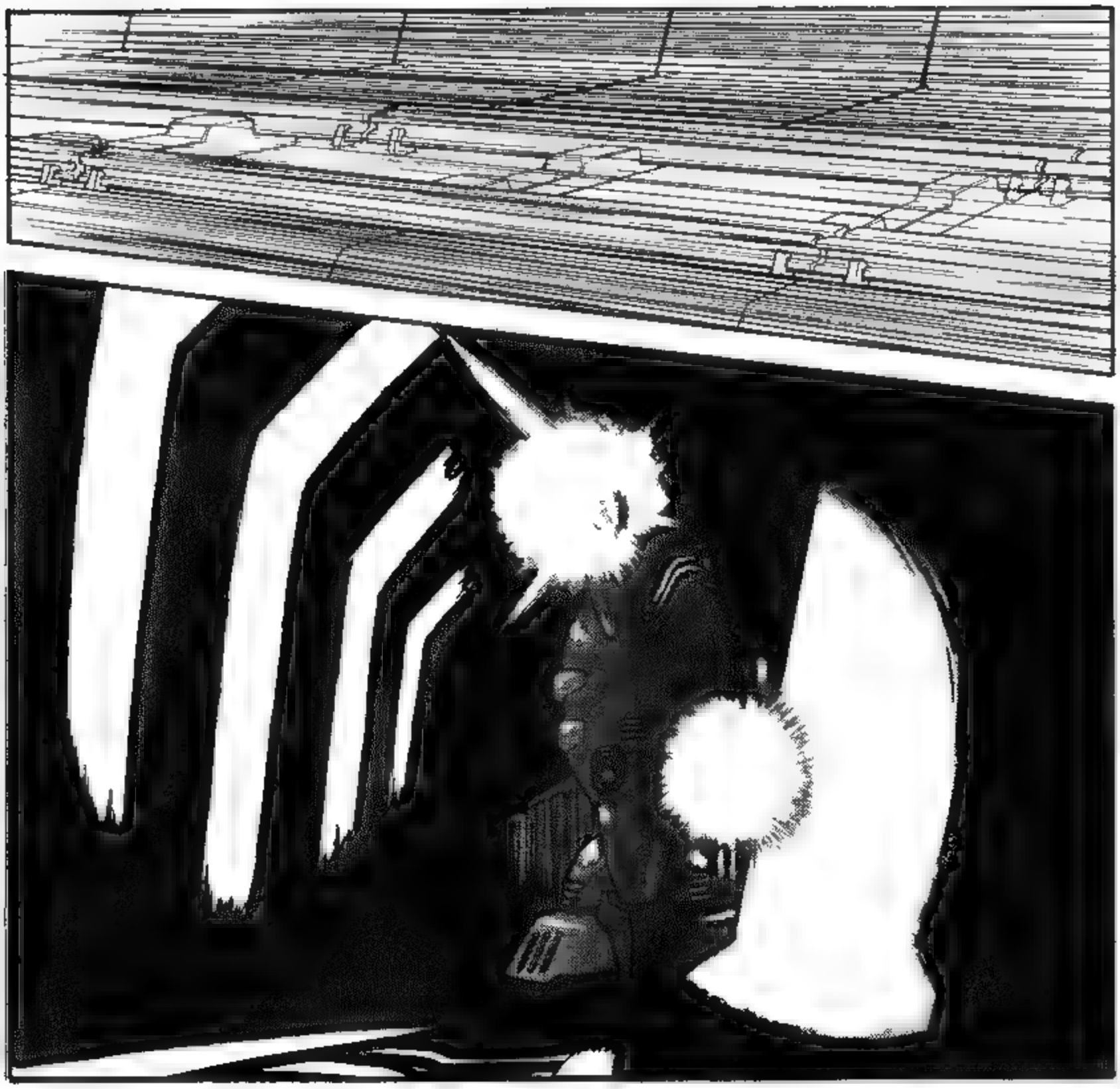
DAAAMN...!

WE ARE BEING LURED DOWN THERE.

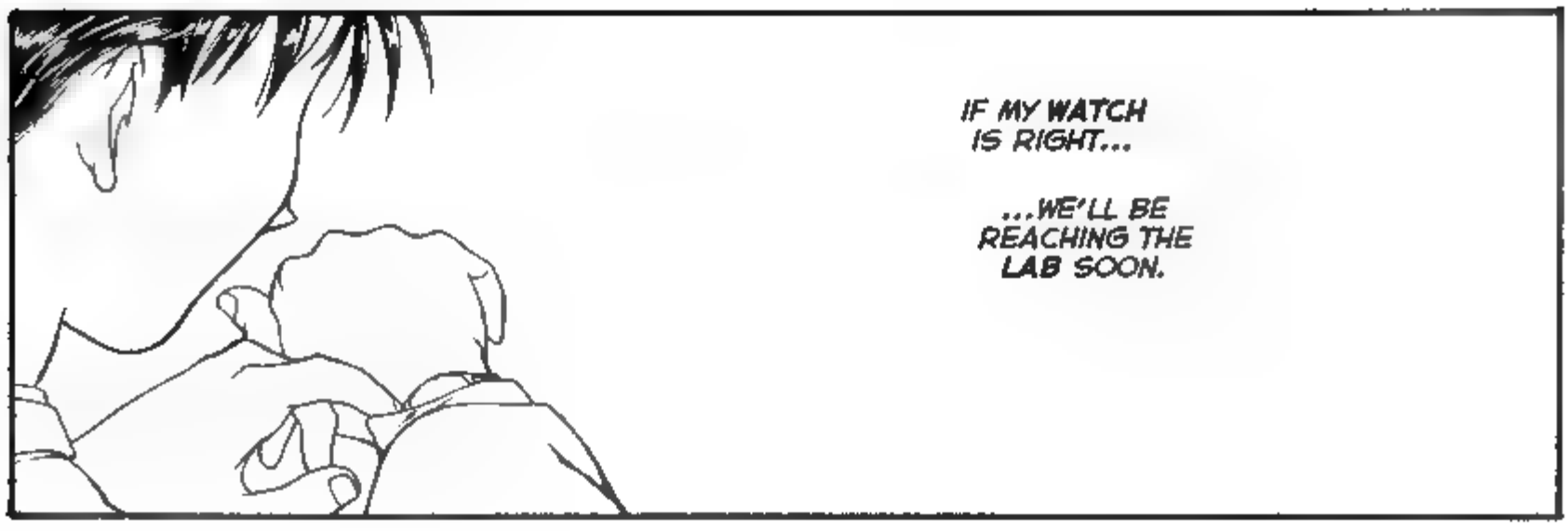
*THIS **MUST** BE A TRAP...!*

*BUT **WHY**...?*

*AND WHAT'S **WAITING** FOR US, DOWN BELOW THIS LAB...?*



K-KLAK
K-KLAK
K-KLAK



ASSUMING I DON'T DIE OF HEART FAILURE IN THE MEANTIME...!

Act 24

HMFF.

HOW ANNOYING.

THMP

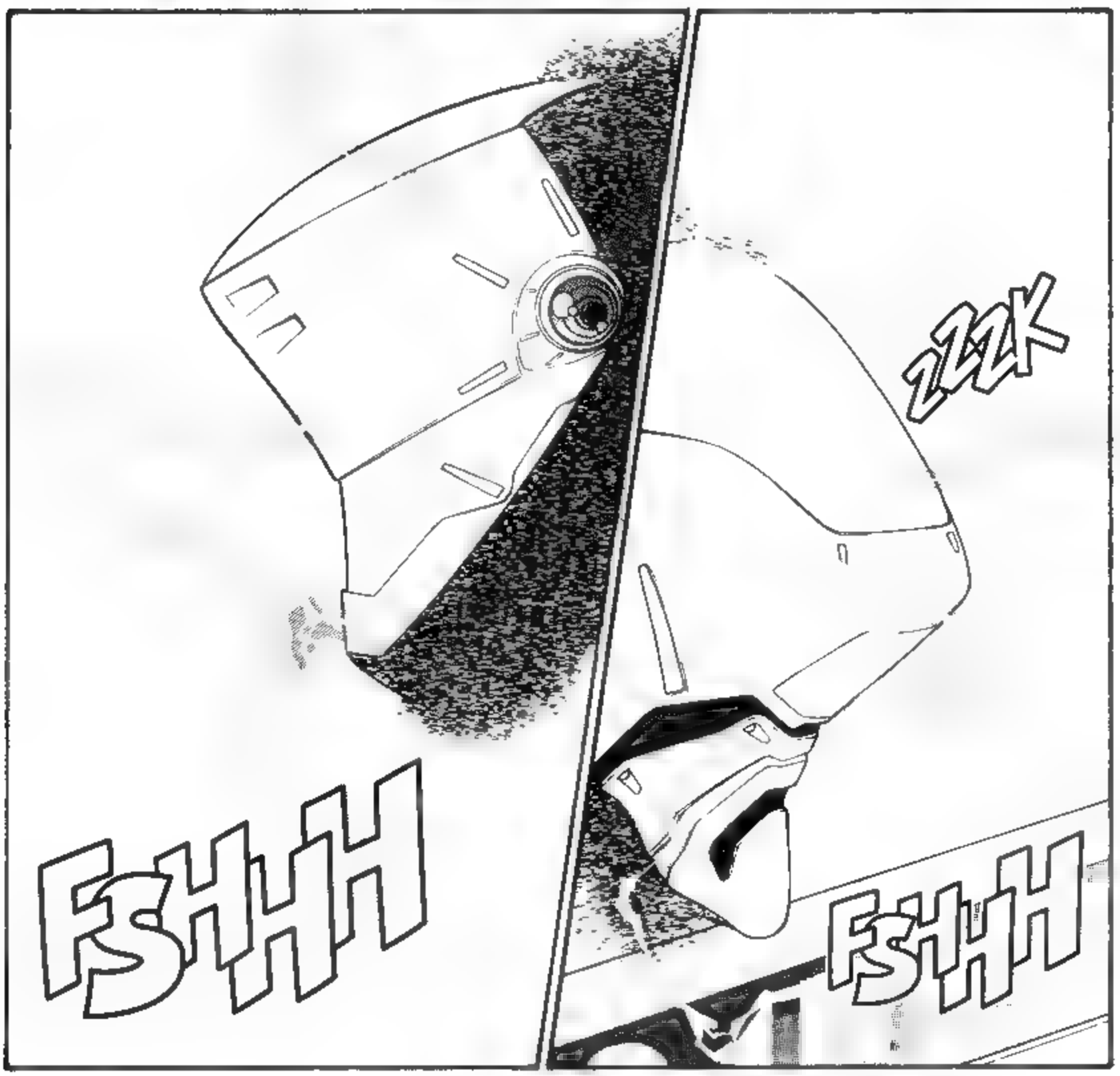
IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THEIR *KINDERGARTEN TEACHER* DIDN'T TEACH THEM *NOT* TO RUN INDOORS... SOMEONE MIGHT GET *HURT*, YES?

NUMBER TWO!

SKEET

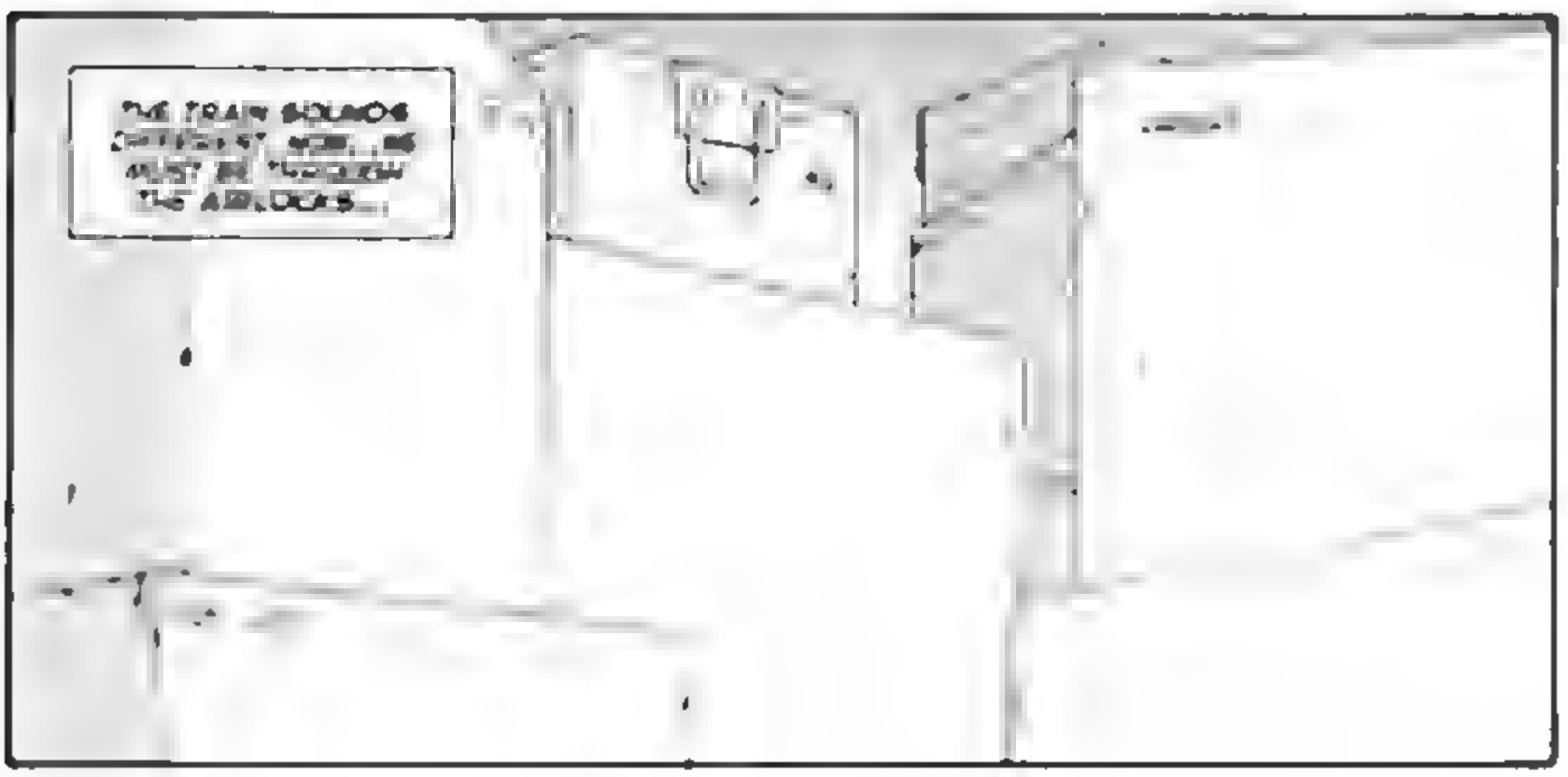
NUMBER THREE!

VREEEE


zzzk
FSHHH
FSHHH

TEACH THEM SOME *DISCIPLINE*, WON'T YOU...?

KAKLAK KAKLAK


THE TRAIN SOUNDS
THE ADULTS

...OUT OF THE VACUUM, AND INTO A PRESSURIZED ZONE.

AND ON THE SUBJECT OF PRESSURE...

HAHH

...HOW CAN KEI SLEEP AT A TIME LIKE THIS?!

THE TWO OF US, ALONE, IN A CLOSED ROOM...!

IF I JUST PUT ONE HAND ON HER SHOULDER... I COULD HOLD HER TIGHT...

MY HEART'S SWOLLEN TO BURSTING!

NOT TO MENTION... OTHER THINGS.

SHAKI

I GUESS KEI DOESN'T REALLY SEE ME AS A MAN.

SIGH... ALL I CAN DO IS SIGH. IT'S PATHETIC...!

THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE, I GUESS...WE HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER SINCE WAY BACK WHEN, YEARS AGO...

IN HER MIND'S EYE, I'M STILL A LITTLE BOY.

A LITTLE BOY...

WAIT A MINUTE, THOUGH... SHE'S OLDER THAN I AM... ISN'T SHE...?

IN THAT VIDEO LETTER SHE SENT ME, TWO YEARS AGO...

...KEI SEEMED SO GROWN-UP, SO MATURE... SO SAD...
NOT LIKE A GIRL... BUT LIKE AN ADULT... A WOMAN, SOMEHOW!

LIKE AN ADULT... SO FAR BEYOND A BOY, A CHILD, LIKE ME...
SO WHY DOES SHE SEEM SO, WELL... IMMATURE, NOW?
AND IT'S NOT JUST THE WAY SHE ACTS...BUT HER FACE, HER WHOLE BODY...
...SOMEHOW, IT SEEMS AS IF SHE'S GOTTEN YOUNGER!

OH, GOD... NONE OF IT MAKES SENSE...!

I'M SO TIRED, I CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT...

KA KLAK KA KLAK

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE WE MET AGAIN, AT THE SPACE ELEVATOR ANCHOR STATION? ONLY A FEW HOURS...?

NO WONDER SHE'S PASSED OUT... SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED... SO MUCH TO DEAL WITH...

SWING

IF SHE'S STILL ON EARTH TIME, OF COURSE SHE'D BE TIRED... SPACE-LAGGED...

SHMP

W-W-WHOA! N-N-NOT THERE! OH, LORDY...!

MMM

UM, UH... ER...

S-SORRY ABOUT TH-THAT, KEI...!

SNIFF

AH?! WHERE AM I...?!

KOKK

OH!

NGK

"

UM, SORRY, SUNAO...! OWWIE...

SO... ARE WE THERE YET?

AH, NO... NOT YET.

BUT...

...THE TRAIN'S JUST CLEARED THE AIRLOCKS, SO WE SHOULD BE ARRIVING PRETTY SOON.

:BRRR:

Y-YOU WERE RIGHT, SUNAO!

I SHOULD'VE BROUGHT W-WARMER CLOTHES!

HUH?

SUNAO, YOU *SHOULDN'T...!*

FORGET IT. THESE FREIGHT CARS HAVE LITTLE TO NO *CLIMATE CONTROL...* BUT NO ONE INVITED US TO *STOW AWAY* HERE, SO I GUESS WE CAN'T COMPLAIN, CAN WE?

DON'T WORRY, KEI... WE'RE *ALMOST* THERE.

MY *JACKET* WILL HAVE TO DO, FOR JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES...

BUT...

...BUT NOW *YOU'LL* CATCH COLD!

NOT THAT I, UM... *MIND IT* WHEN A GUY DOES STUFF LIKE THIS FOR A GIRL.

BUT YOU TAKE BEING A SWEET GUY *SO FAR*, SUNAO... I ALMOST FEEL LIKE I'M TAKING *ADVANTAGE* OF YOUR *NICENESS!*

AND SO...

HUH?

FWSSH

THERE!

!

FWAP

WH...WH... WHAT...? KEI... WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?!

NOT THAT I *MIND* IT WHEN A GIRL DOES STUFF LIKE THIS...

N-NOW, UM... WE'RE *BOTH* W-WARM, AREN'T WE...?

SUNAO...? CAN YOU, UM, DO ME A *FAVOR?* JUST... *TURN* YOUR HEAD.

I MEAN... I CHANGED *CLOTHES,* BUT THERE WASN'T TIME TO WASH MY *HAIR...* IT *CAN'T* SMELL GOOD!

AH...! UM, OKAY...

IS SHE KIDDING..?

UM... THERE YOU GO...

SHRKK IT... IT'S *NO GOOD...!*

MY HEART'S POUNDING LIKE A JACKHAMMER...!

I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE DOESN'T HEAR IT...FEEL IT!

OH, GOD... SHE'S REALLY HERE!

KEI IS HERE WITH ME... RIGHT HERE!

I CAN FEEL HER...

...SO WARM...

SUNAO...?

I CAN ALMOST FEEL HER HEART BEATING...!

SHE'S ALIVE... SHE'S REALLY AND TRULY ALIVE!

SUNAO?

UM... SUNAO, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...? YOU'RE BREATHING FUNNY...

MM?

W-WHAT'S THAT, KEI...?

I SAID, YOUR BREATHING IS—OH? SUNAO...? WHAT'S WRONG?!

YOU'RE C-CRYING! WH-WHY?!

AH...?

OH... UH, I'M *FINE!*

IT'S JUST BEEN S-SO LONG... SINCE I'VE *SEEN* YOU, KEI...

OH, SUNAO... F-*FORGIVE* ME...! AT THE *ANCHOR STATION*... WHEN WE FIRST *MET*...

...AND I...I DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE IT WAS YOU...IT MUST HAVE HURT... OH, *SUNAO!* I'M SO, SO *SORRY!*

!?

KHNKK

SKREEE

Act 25

KLNK

SNFF

WHUD

NNGH...

WH... WHAT THE *HECK...?* WOW...

DO THESE LUNAR TRAINS *ALWAYS* STOP LIKE THIS...?

KTHNKK

NO...

...THIS *WASN'T* A SCHEDULED STOP. AND WE'RE *NOT* AT THE STATION.

BUT WE ARE INSIDE THE DOME'S CORE, AT LEAST...

I...I FEEL SOMETHING... AN AURA, A PRESENCE... BUT WHAT IS IT...?

THE SENSATION IS SO PAINFUL... SO OPPRESSIVE... SO EVIL...!

SUNAOOO! GEEZ! HELP ME UP!

AH! SORRY, KEI...!

SOMETHING *STRANGE* IS HAPPENING, I'M AFRAID... LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, NOW!

CAN YOU HEAR THAT, KEL...?
IT SOUNDS LIKE PEOPLE YELLING, DOESN'T IT ? LOTS OF PEOPLE YELLING

...AND IT'S COMING FROM *DOWN THERE...*

I...I GUESS WE BETTER... GO FIND OUT WHAT'S *HAPPENING,* SUNAO...!

HAHH?

W-
WAIT--!

DON'T,
KEI--!

COME
BACK--!

THIS IS CRAZY...
WE SHOULDN'T BE
CHARGING IN LIKE
THIS...BECAUSE
SOMETHING DOWN
THERE FEELS...

...NIGHTMARISH!

YES SIR!

SIXTH PLATOON ADVANCING THROUGH *SECTOR C-4*--

--SQUAD S-1, COME IN! *REPEAT*, SQUAD S-1--

...

...

...!

--THE CASE OF *AMPS!* NO, THE *RED-LABELED* ONES!

YOUR SIGNAL'S *BREAKING UP*, SQUAD S-3!

SAY *AGAIN!*

SECOND PLATOON IS REPORTING *ENGAGEMENT WITH HOSTILES*--

THIRD PLATOON, MERGE YOUR *SURVIVING TROOPS* WITH TWELFTH PLATOON--

--AND EVACUATE YOUR *WOUNDED* TO THE REAR--

--*ROGER*, HQ! NOW ASSUMING COMMAND OF SQUAD R-4--

NO RESPONSE FROM SEVENTH PLATOON!

TAK TAKKA

JUST HOLD ON, BOY!

IT'S ONLY A SCRATCH, DAMN IT--!

MEDIC! WE NEED A MEDIC OVER HERE!

NOW!

I DON'T *BELIEVE* THIS! OUR *FINEST* TROOPS, WITH THE *BEST* OF EQUIPMENT... AND WE'RE BEING *SLAUGHTERED*, HERE!

WHAT *IS* THIS, DAMN IT? WHAT THE HELL KIND OF *NEST OF MONSTERS* HAVE YOU SENT US INTO, *DOCTOR HEIDEMANN?!*

POK

POK

POK

POK POK POK

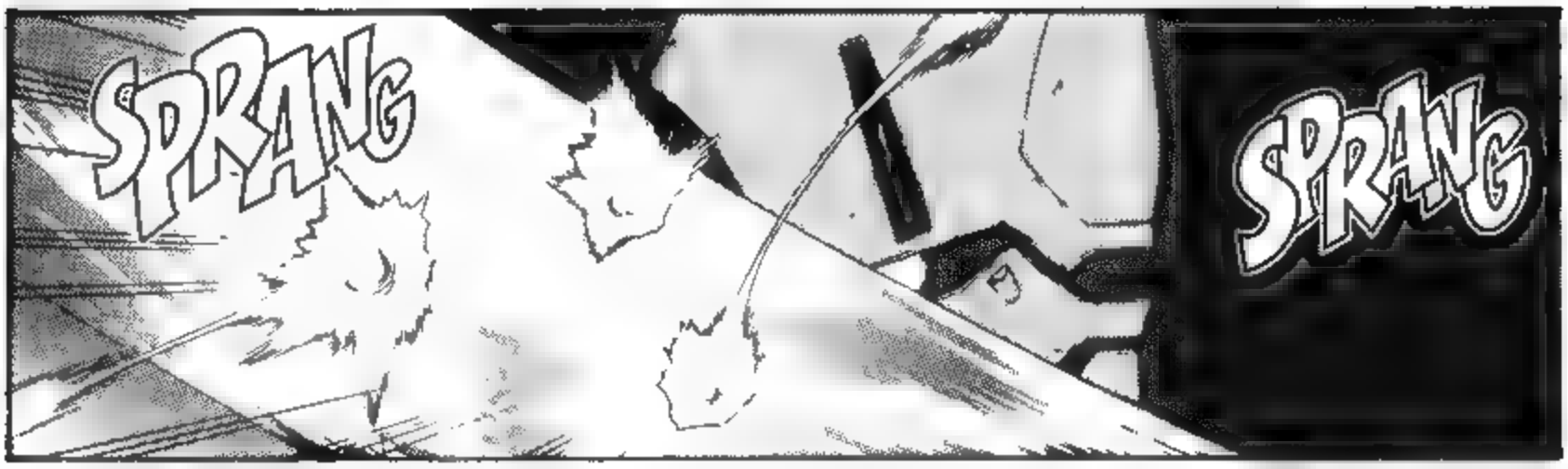
HYAAAH!

SPAK SPAK SPAK

SPAK SPAK

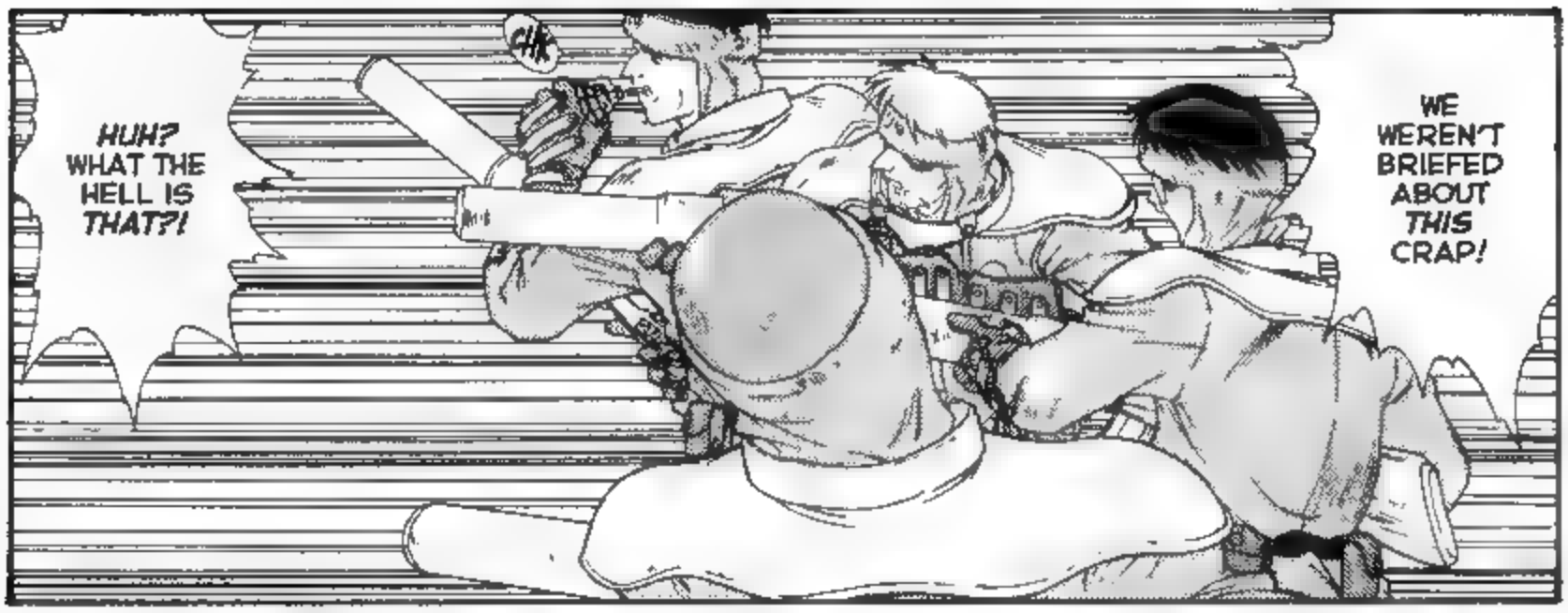
KPWINGG

KPWINGG

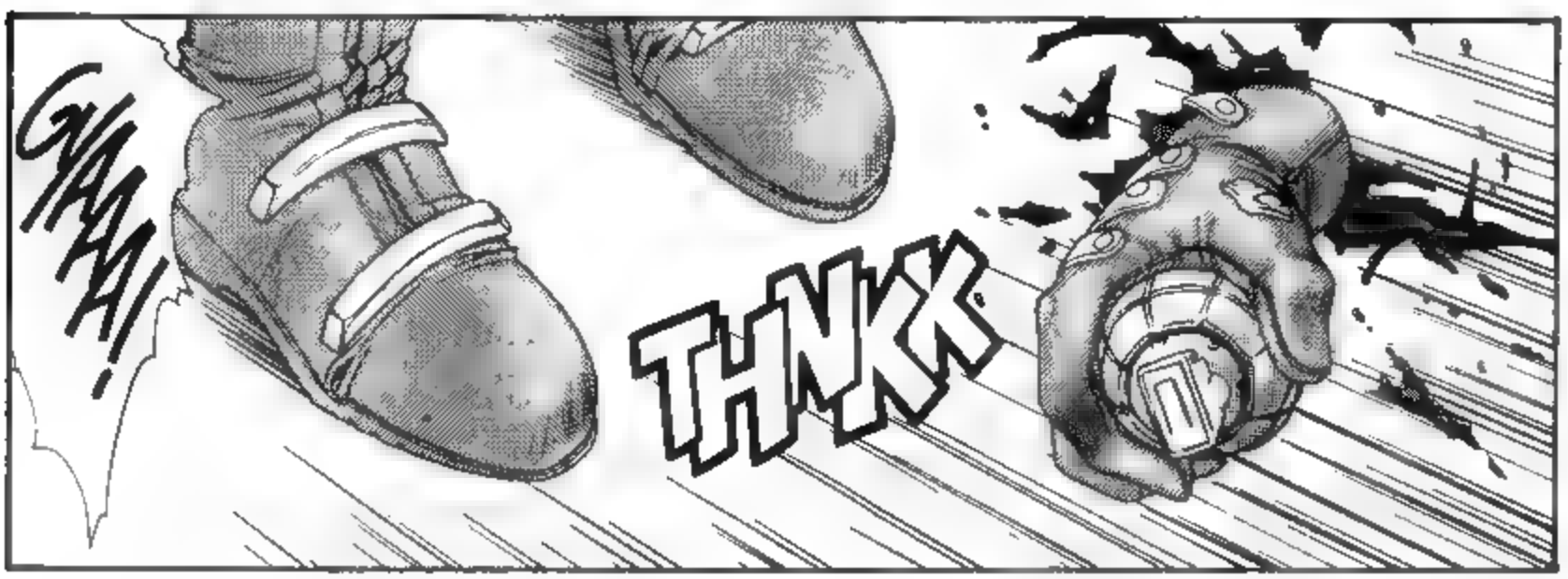

SPRANG
SPRANG

GCHOK

HELLMAN!
:HRRGK:
UN
UN


CHK
HUH? WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?!
WE WEREN'T BRIEFED ABOUT THIS CRAP!

ZZLP
WHR


GHAAA!
THNKK

WHKOOM

KSHHHH!

LET ME BE *BLUNT*, DOCTOR... AGAINST THE KIND OF *OVER-WHELMING FORCE* THEY'RE FACING HERE...
...THERE'S *NOT A GODDAMNED THING MY TROOPS CAN DO!*

WE NEED TO REGROUP INTO A *DEFENSIVE FORMATION* AND--
SIR!

NINTH PLATOON HAS ENGAGED A *NEW* TARGET! UPLOADING THEIR *VIDEO FEED* NOW!

Act 26

DAMN IT!

WHAM

MY MEN ARE BEING *BUTCHERED* EN MASSE...

...AND NOW EVEN OUR *ESCAPE ROUTE* IS UNDER THREAT! I CAN'T TOLERATE THESE *LOSSES* ANY LONGER!

ON MY AUTHORITY AS *MISSION COMMANDER*, I'M ORDERING A *WITHDRAWAL!* DO YOU *HEAR* ME, DOCTOR?

...

...

SO BE IT.

GENERAL RETREAT! NOW!!

UNDER-STOOD, SIR.

HQ TO ALL UNITS: FALL BACK IMMEDIATELY, BY PLATOONS! I REPEAT, FALL BACK!

I EXPECTED WE'D ENCOUNTER SOME IMPROVISED RESISTANCE... BUT NOT THIS!!

DAMN YOU, APEP... HOW DID YOU LEARN TO CONTROL THE SENTINELS LIKE THAT...?

WHAT DID APEP DO, FATHER?!

?!

HAHH

HHF

HAHH

HAHH

HAHH

HUH?! WHO THE HELL ARE Y--

OOF

KEI?! WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* HERE...?

THWD

FATHER!

FATHER, TELL ME...!

DID SOMETHING HAPPEN TO APEP?! IS HE ALL RIGHT?!

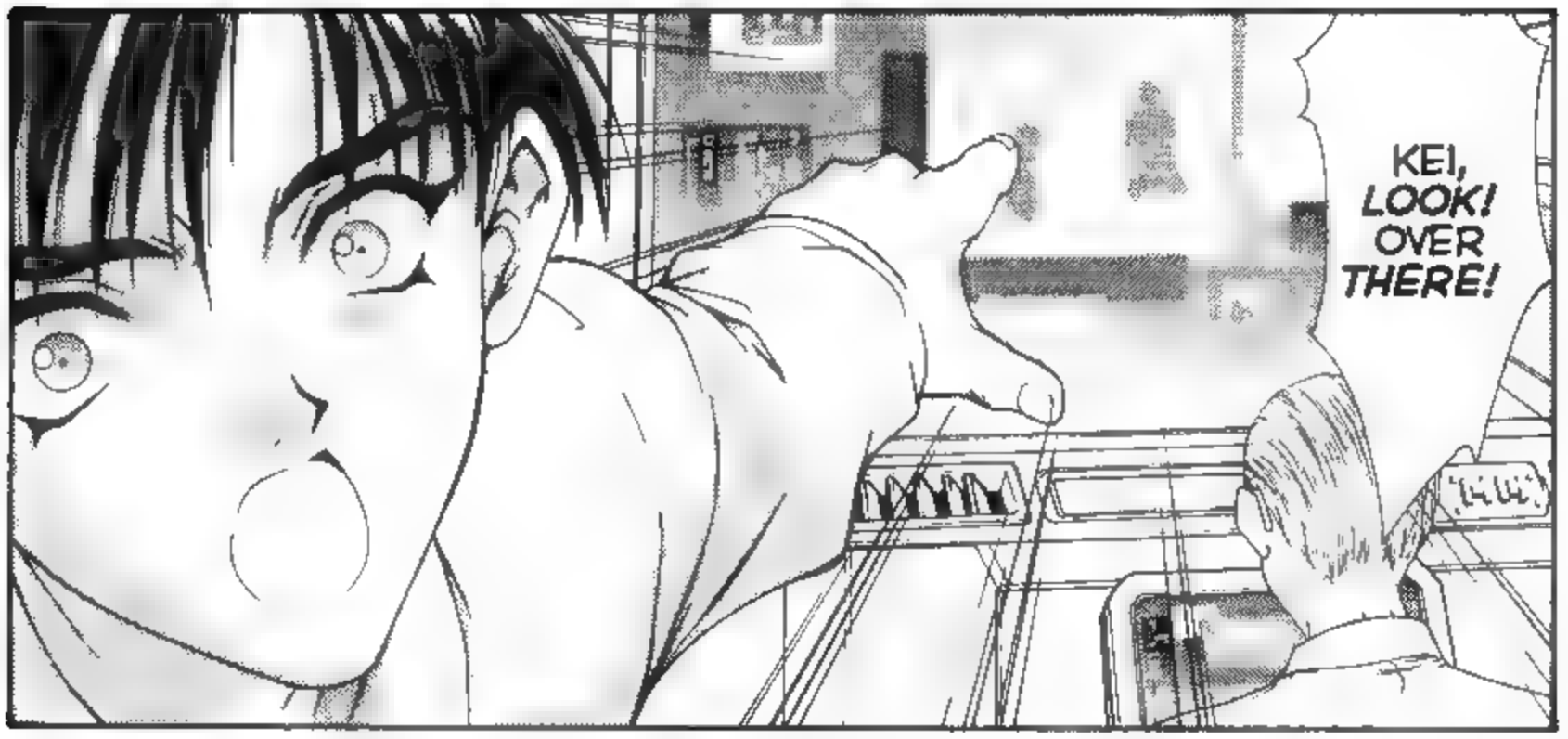
AND WHAT ARE ALL THESE SOLDIERS DOING HERE...?

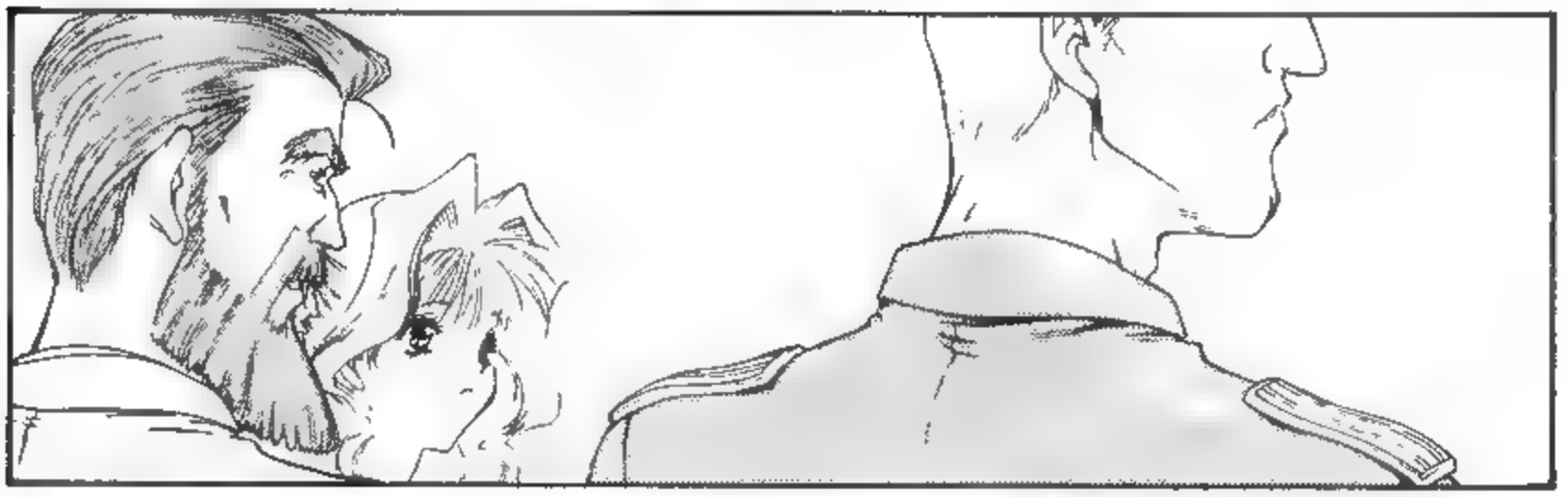
THIS DOESN'T CONCERN YOU, KEI!

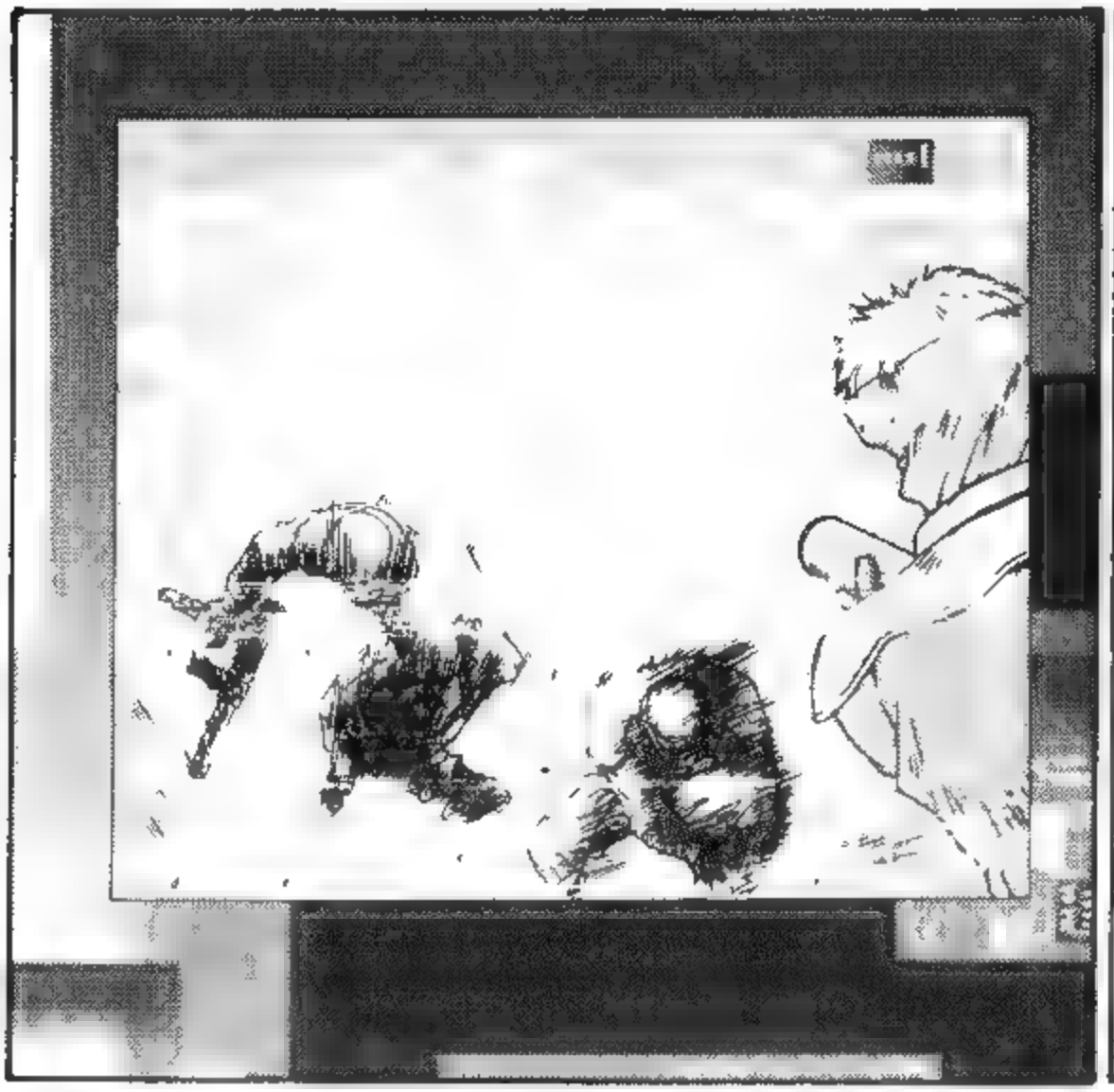
YOU MUST GO BACK TO THE CITY! NOW!

I CAN'T RISK YOU BEING HERE! ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN!

B-BUT...


KEI, LOOK! OVER THERE!





OH?! THEY'RE F-FIGHTING SOMETHING... AND THEY'RE GETTING HURT!

SUNAO... WHAT'S GOING ON...?

NO!

NOT THAT ONE..!

LOOK AT THE *OTHER* SCREEN-- ON THE *LEFT!*

THERE!

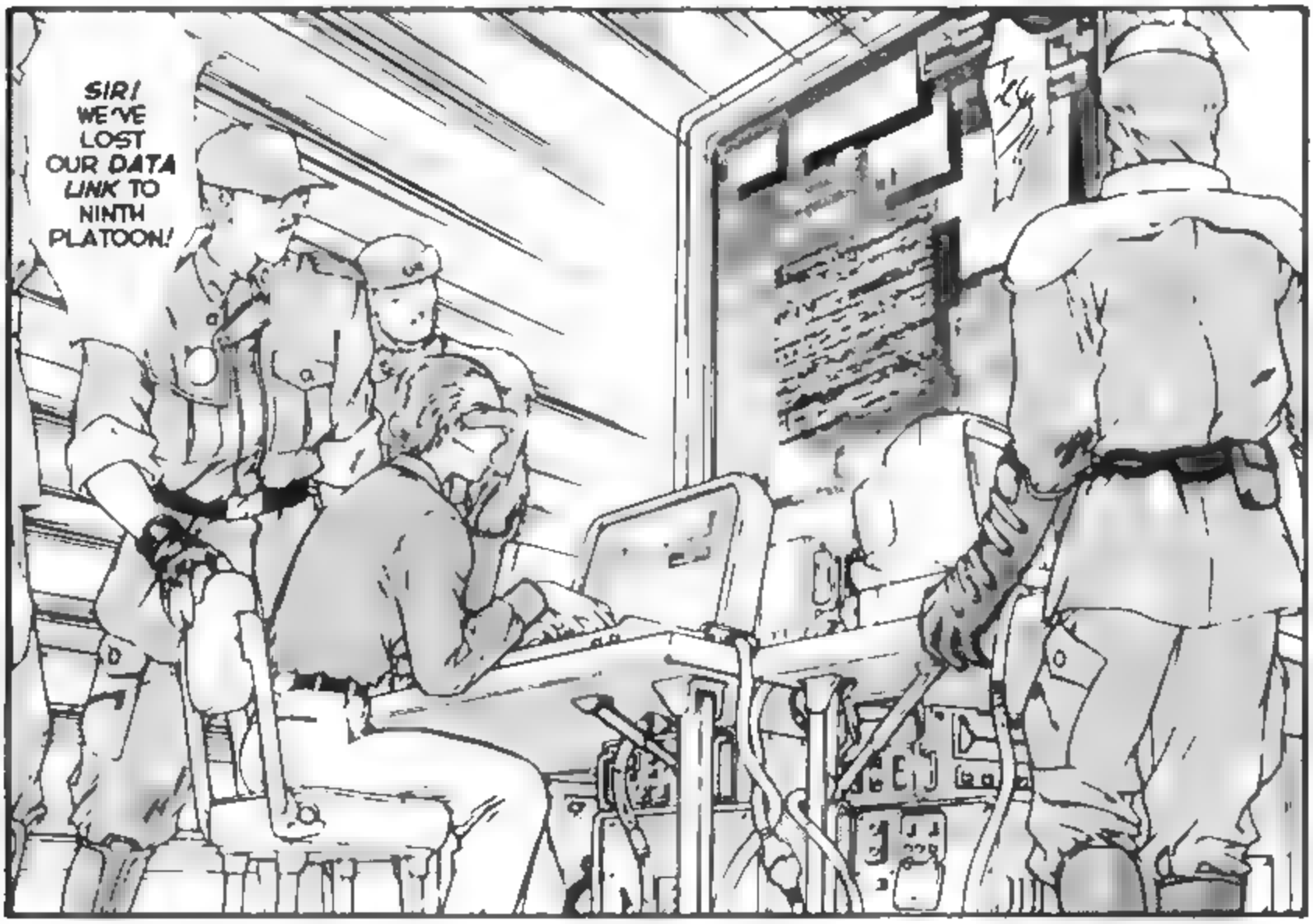
SEE ...?

!

KEI... ISN'T THAT MISS M-ZAK...?

OH, *GOD...* YES, THAT'S *HER...!*

KSHH
AH?!


SIR! WE'VE LOST OUR DATA LINK TO NINTH PLATOON!

THAT WAS ATTIM, OUT FIGHTING WITH THOSE SOLDIERS, SUNAO!
I KNOW IT!
S... SUNAO...?

WHAT IS THIS SENSATION I'M FEELING...?

SOMEHOW... I'M GETTING A SENSE OF OVERWHELMING THREAT...!

THERE WAS... THERE WAS SOMETHING OUT THERE, BEYOND MISS M-ZAK...!

I'VE FELT IT...

...I'VE FELT THIS... PRESENCE... SOMEWHERE BEFORE...!

THAT'S IT! OF COURSE ...!

I'M SENSING A MONSTER LIKE THE ONE THAT ATTACKED US IN THE RESTAURANT, KEI!

WHAT DID YOU SAY, YOUNG MAN? HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED ONE OF THE SENTINELS?!

HUH?

UH... "SENTINELS"...? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SIR...?

S... SENTINELS...?

N- NO...!

FWIP

SENTINELS...? OH, GOD... I *KNOW* THEM...!

THEY WERE THOSE *MONSTERS*... FROM... FROM THE *STARSHIP!*

KEL..?!

GOOD *LORD*... IS YOUR *MEMORY* RETURN-ING...?

OH, *SUNAO*... WE HAVE TO *DO* SOME-THING!!

D-DON'T YOU *UNDER-STAND*, SUNAO? *ATTIM* IS BACK THERE FIGHTING SUPERPOWERED *ALIEN MONSTERS!!*

WE HAVE TO GO HELP HER!!

W-WE HAVE TO...

...B-BECAUSE IF WE *DON'T...*

THOSE
BEASTS!!"

→HAHH←
→HAHH←
→HAHH←

I'LL HOLD IT OFF! GET THE WOUNDED OUT OF HERE!

J-JEEZ!
ARE YOU CRAZY, GIRL?
UN

Y'THINK YOU CAN HANDLE THAT MONSTER *ALONE?!*

IF I *CAN'T*, THEN WE'RE ALL *DEAD ANYWAY*-- AREN'T WE?!

SO *MOVE IT*, SOLDIER! THIS IS BOUND TO GET *MESSY!*

....!

ALL RIGHT, ALREADY! I'LL LEAVE THIS ONE TO THE *BADASS* CHICK, OKAY? SHIT!!

?!

HEY! LOOK OUT!

WHOOSH

SUPPRESSOR FIELD PROJECTOR...

...ACTIVATE!

ZIOM

KCHAK

SERAPHIC FEATHER

Takeda's Commente

一度この第三巻から原作を引き継ぎました。前任の森本先生と森本ファンの皆さんには申し訳ありませんが，徐々にオリジナルストーリーを展開していくつもりでいますので，うたたね先生共々，以後よろしくお付き合いの程をお願い致します。

武田俊也

Utatane's Commente

やきもきしていた読者の方々お待たせしました。体制が変わりようやく話が動き始めて私もほっとしています。

今回ますます買うのが恥ずかしい表紙になっていますが，女性キャラも一巡してしまったので次巻はどうしましょうかねえ……ふっふっふ。

うたたねひろゆき

アフタヌーンKC132

セラフィック・フェザー 3

武田俊也 & うたたねひろゆき

講談社
520

VMMM

NOW!!

HYAAA!

WHSHNG

SKRNGG

FSHH

FSHH

FSHH

KCHHNGG

KCHHNGG

SHNK

FFT

!

HMFF.

SOME *SUPRESSOR FIELD*, HUH? IT ONLY *SLOWED YOU DOWN* FOR AN INSTANT... NOT *QUITE* LONG ENOUGH...!

DAMN...!

Act 27

SKSHH

FWHOOM

GYAAA!

H-*HEY!* Y'TELL ME TO *RUN*, THEN YOU *FOLLOW* ME...?

GET *OUT* OF HERE! IT'S ATTACKING *AGAIN!*

SHOOM
SHNK
UWAAA!
GHOOM GHOOM

WHROOM

D-DAMN! THIS BAD BOY IS ALL YOURS, GIRL!

FSHOOM

SHOOM

;HRKK-

FWSHM

AAA!

WHOOSH

SKRANGG

THMPP

SKAK AK

SHRANG

NNG

IT'S WEARING ME DOWN, BIT BY BIT... CAN'T KEEP THIS UP MUCH LONGER...!

CHOOM CHOOM CHOOM

UMMM
VREEE
FZZK!
THAT SUPPRESSOR-FIELD PROJECTOR... A PRESENT FROM THE GOOD DOCTOR HEIDEMANN, I SUPPOSE?
HMFF.
STILL... QUITE A WOMAN, REALLY.

I'M HOLDING *NUMBER TWO* BACK, HAVING HIM OPERATE AT [illegible] ONLY WITH THAT PRIMITIVE TOY... [illegible]!

IS SHE *GENE-ENHANCED*, I WONDER...? NO, HER REFLEXES [illegible]

I [illegible] HAD TIME FOR "[illegible]" ANGEL! BUT I'M [illegible] WORRIED.

MAKE YOU KNOW THIS LITTLE PARTY [illegible]

SHARKS

HYAAA!

SKRAK

SKRANGG

HATE USING GOVERN-MENT-ISSUE GEAR--!

TOO DAMN UN-RELIABLE --!

NOT TO MENTION BADLY DESIGNED...

SHINNGG

GYAAA!

KCHOOM

SPLRKK

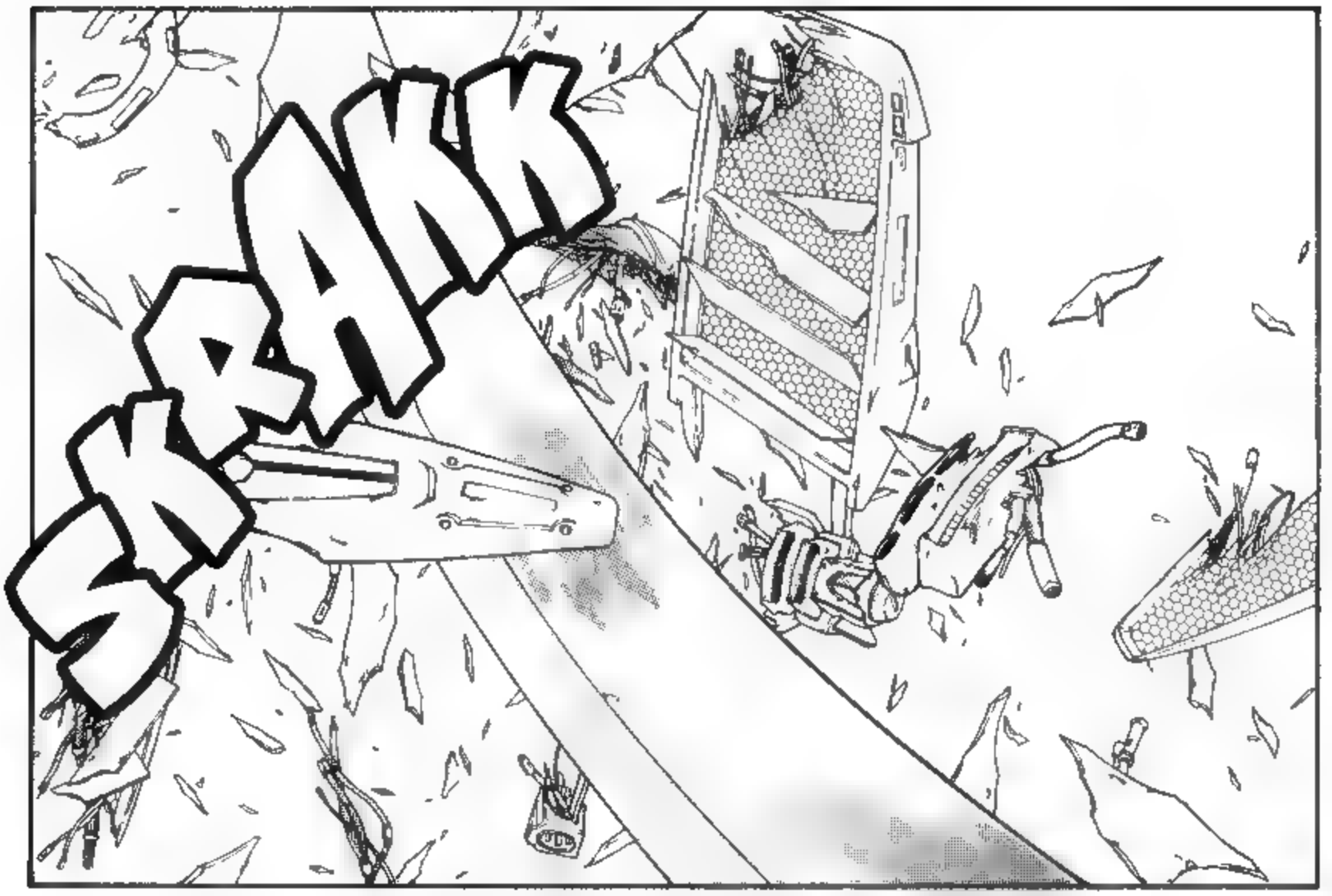
SPLRKK

SPLRKK

FWAPP

FWOOSH

BLRPP


SKRAKK

FWSH
SKRAKK

THARP

FWHITT

WHSCH

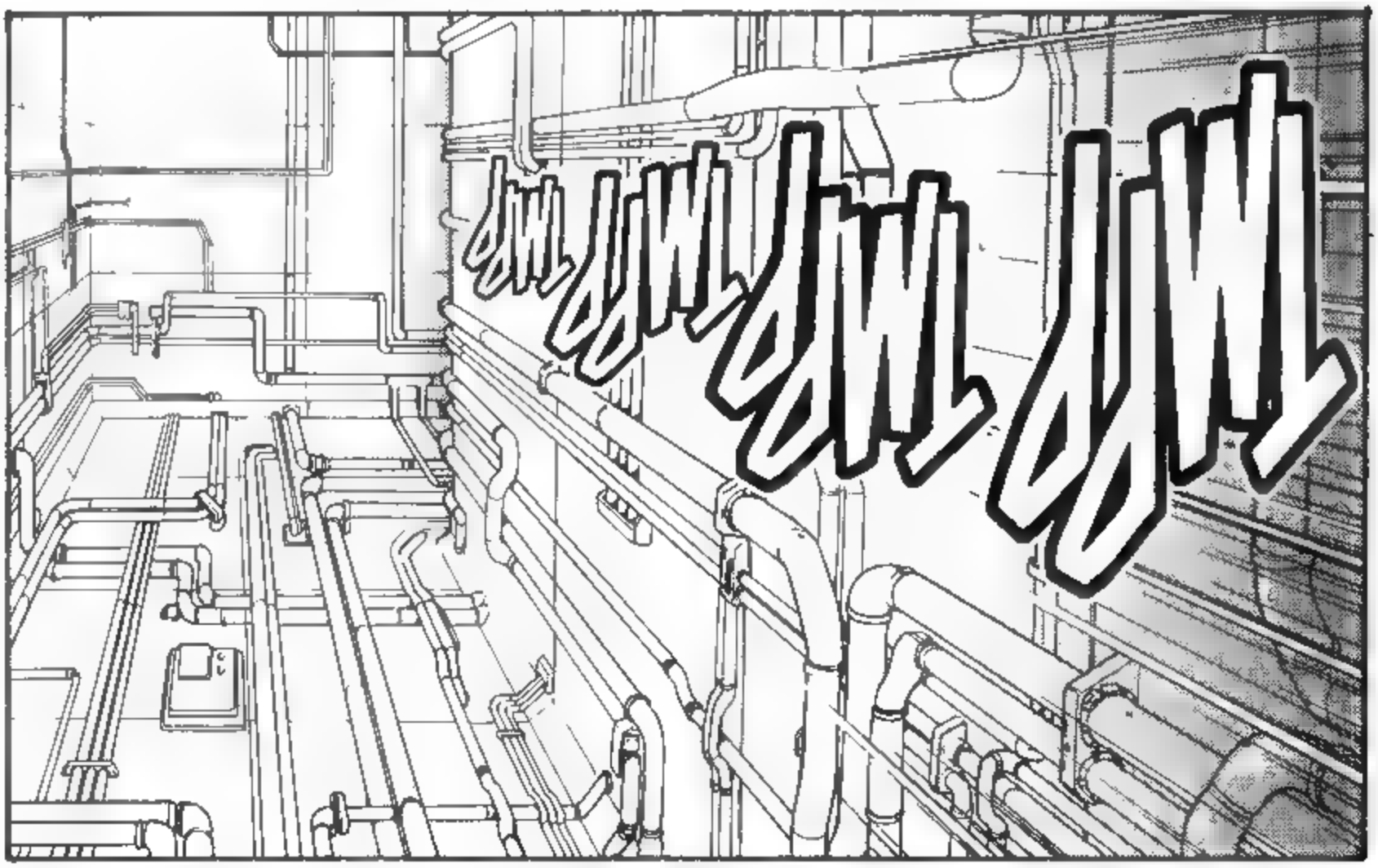
SPANGG

WHSCH

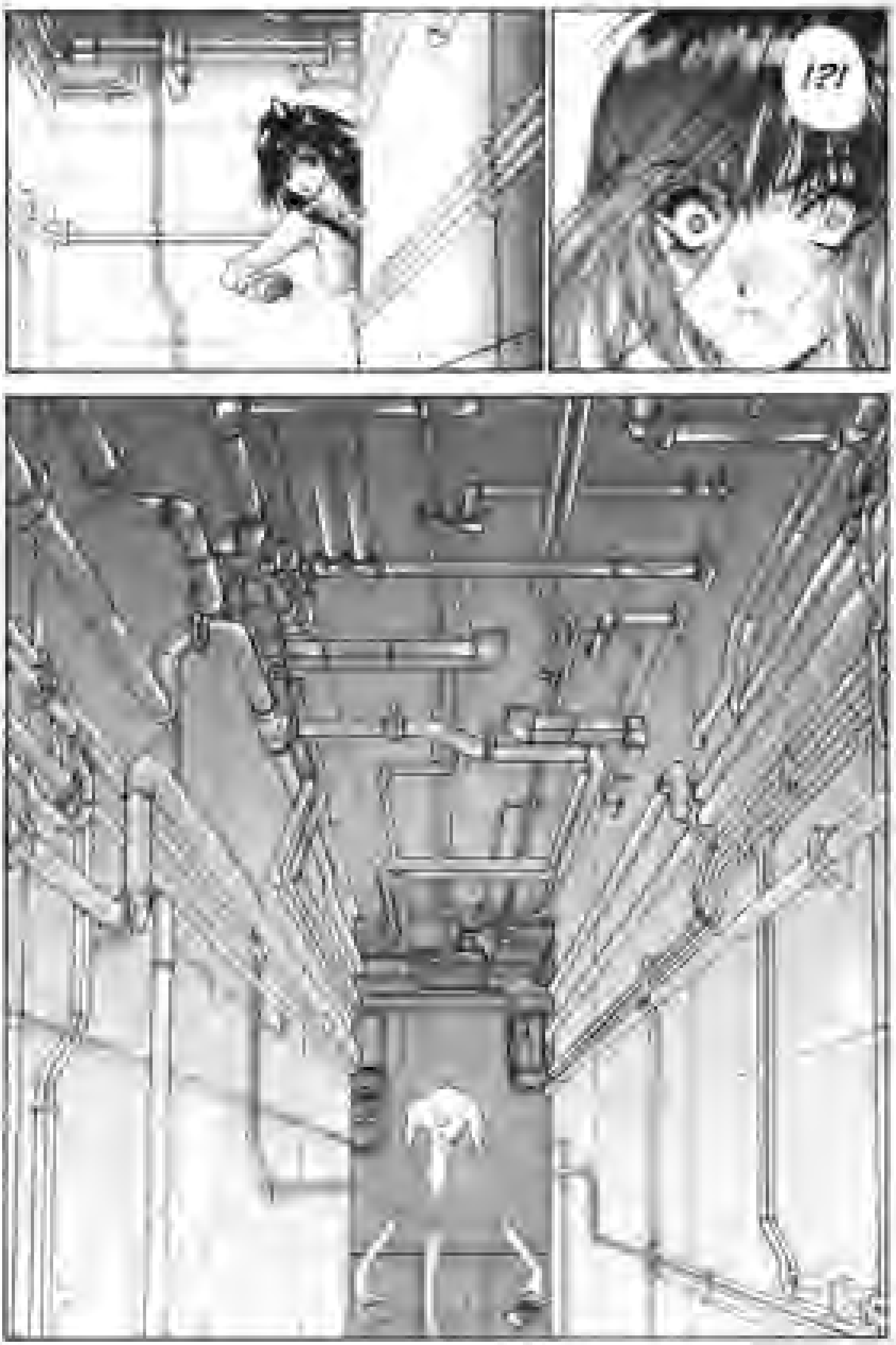
WHSCH

SPANGG

WHIPP


THUD THUD THUD

BUH-BYE, NOW!



Y-YOU DIDN'T--!

EVAC.

IF SOMEONE DIDN'T BUY THE REST OF US TIME TO HAUL ASS, WE'D ALL HAVE BEEN KILLED!

UN

UN

CAN'T YOU UNDER-STAND ...?

GUESS THAT'S TOO MUCH TO ASK, HUH?

LOOK... I'M SORRY, MISS.

HKK

F-FATHER... FATHER, PLEASE...

SOBB

CAN'T YOU... SAVE ATTIM...?

KEI... IF THE *SUPPRESSOR FIELD* IS INEFFECTIVE, THERE'S *NOTHING* WE CAN DO TO STOP THE *SENTINELS.*

THE *EVACUATION* IS ALMOST COMPLETE-- WE CAN'T HOLD IT UP FOR *JUST ONE PERSON!*

I CAN'T *SACRIFICE* ANY MORE TROOPS TO HELP YOUR FRIEND, KEI... I'M *SORRY.*

YOU, THERE... *SUNAO,* ISN'T IT?

TAKE CARE OF *KEI* FOR A MOMENT, WON'T YOU? I HAVE TO TALK TO THE *UNIT COMMANDER* IMMEDIATELY.

:HKK:

H-HEY... *SUNAO* ...?

DO YOU THINK *ATTIM...*

!

...DO YOU THINK SHE'S GOING TO... TO *DIE* ...?

AH... N-*NO!* SHE'LL BE *FINE*, OF COURSE...!

UM... *RIGHT?* I MEAN, LIKE YOU SAID...

...MISS M-ZAK IS, YOU KNOW... *SPECIAL...*

B-BUT... SHE'S FIGHTING *MONSTERS*, SUNAO! CREATURES LIKE YOU CAN'T EVEN *IMAGINE!*

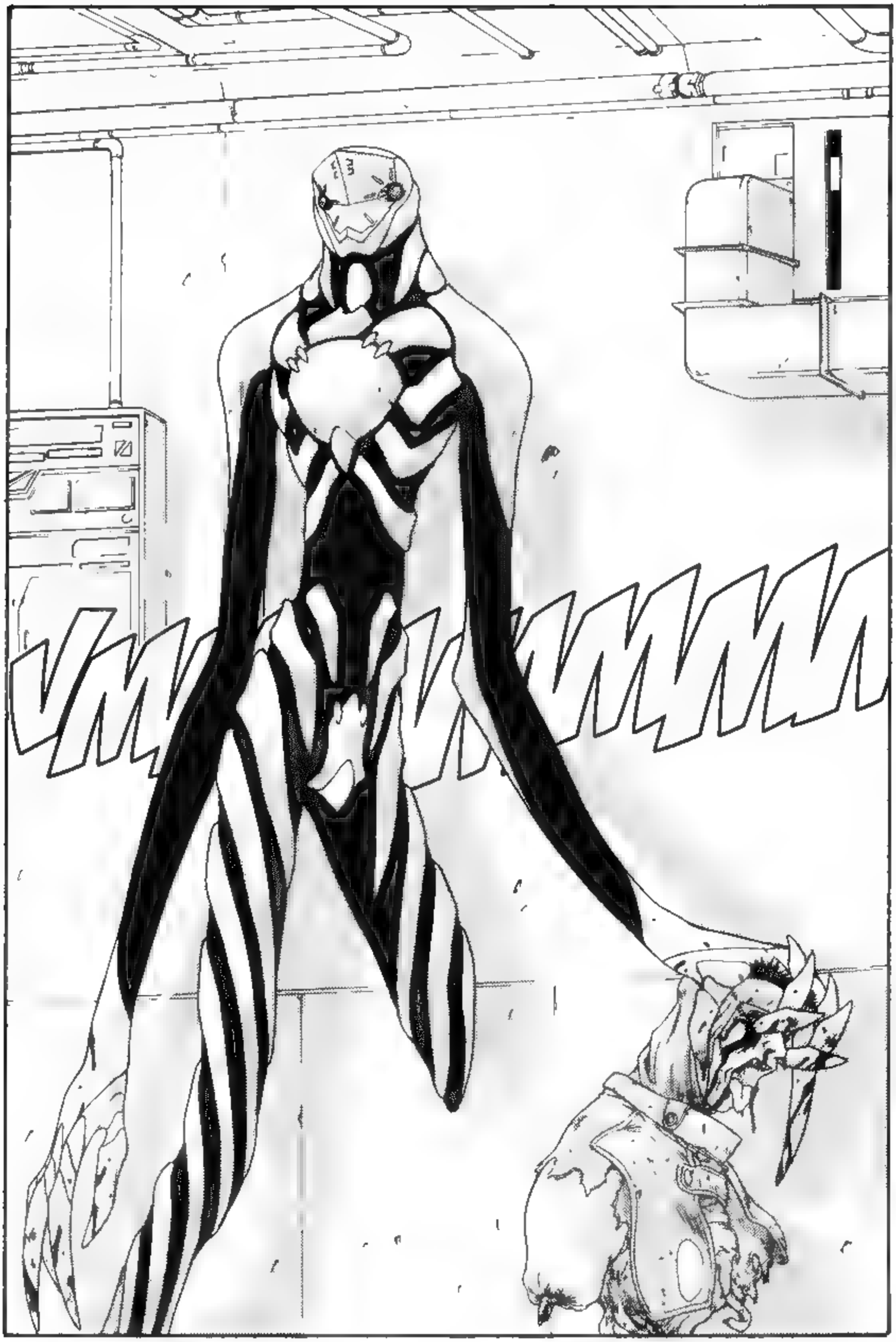
THUMP

SOMEONE...

...HELP...!

SOMEONE HELP ATTIM...

...PLEASE...!



KSHANGG

SHRAK

YOU INHUMAN BASTARD...

HMFF.

WHY DON'T YOU BEASTIES GIVE ME A *BREAK*, HUH?

FWIP

HYAAA!

...WITH THOSE **ARMS**, YOU'VE GOT THE **REACH** ADVANTAGE... BUT IF I CAN GET IN **CLOSE**...

...I HAVE A CHANCE!

SPANGG
SPANGG
SPANGG

MADE IT--!
SHWNGG
WHSHH

GLCCH

THN

LK

!

GCCH

N-
NO!!

AWHTT

AA

SPLCCH

=GKK=

=HUHH=

=UHHH=

SLSH

SOME...
ONE...

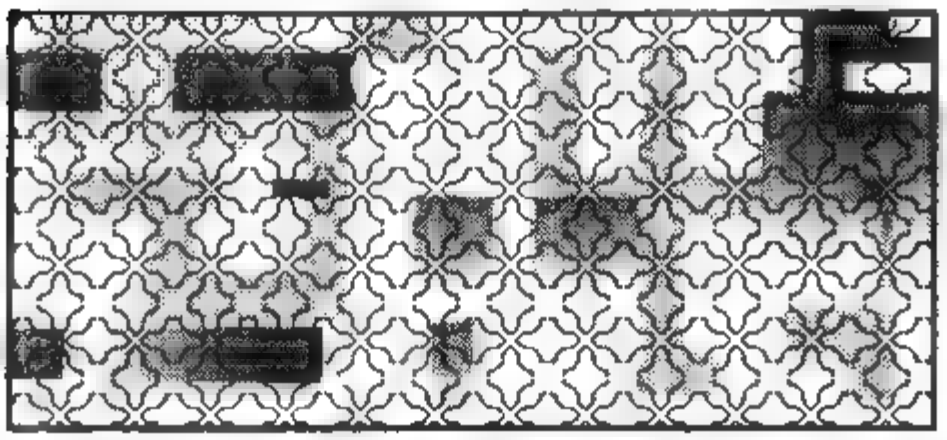
=KOFF=

...SOMEONE HELP...

...PLEASE... HELP HER...!

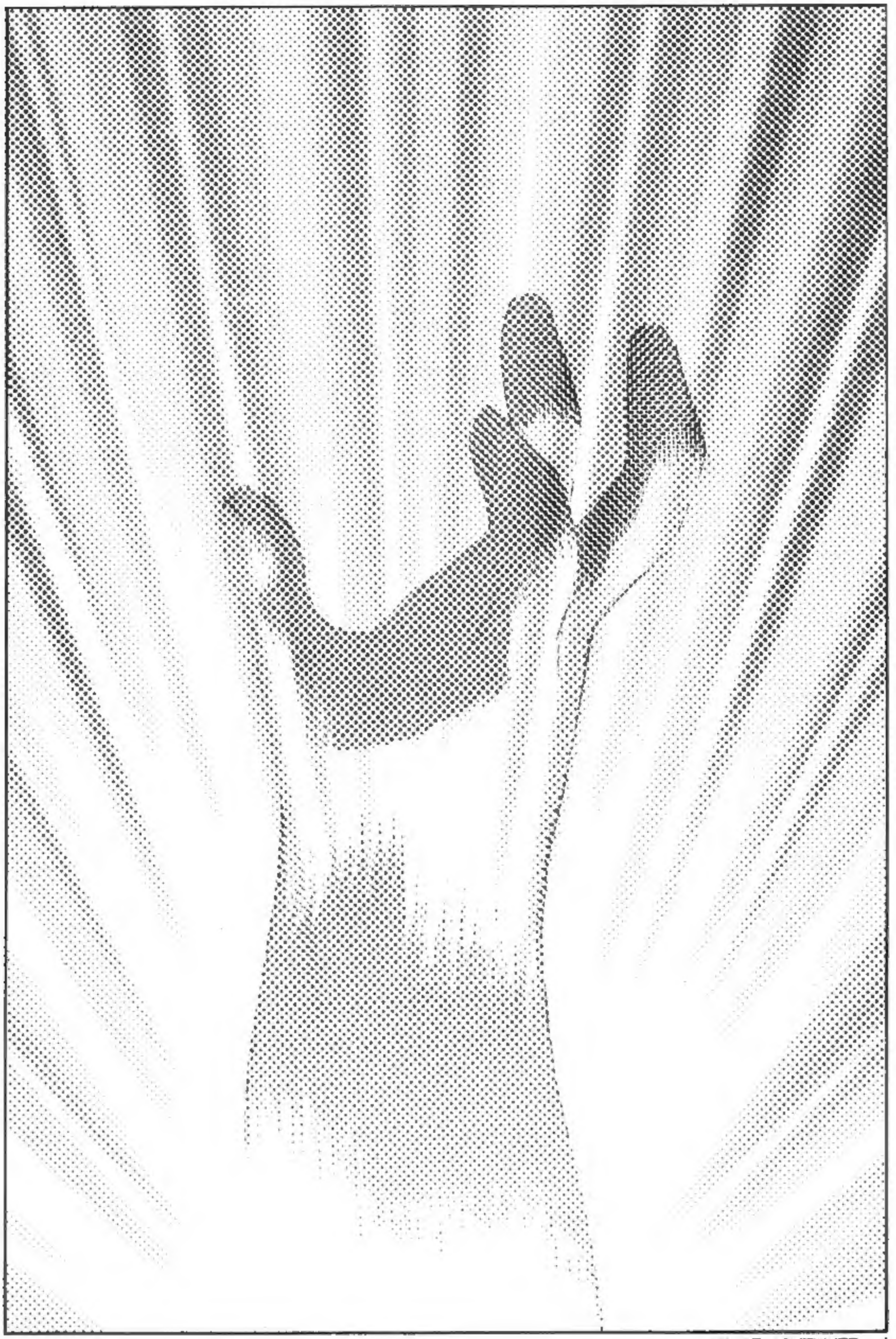
SOMEONE...

...PLEASE...



VREEEEE

...PLEASE...!
KRIK
KNCH
SNAK
FSSHOOM



TO BE CONTINUED...!

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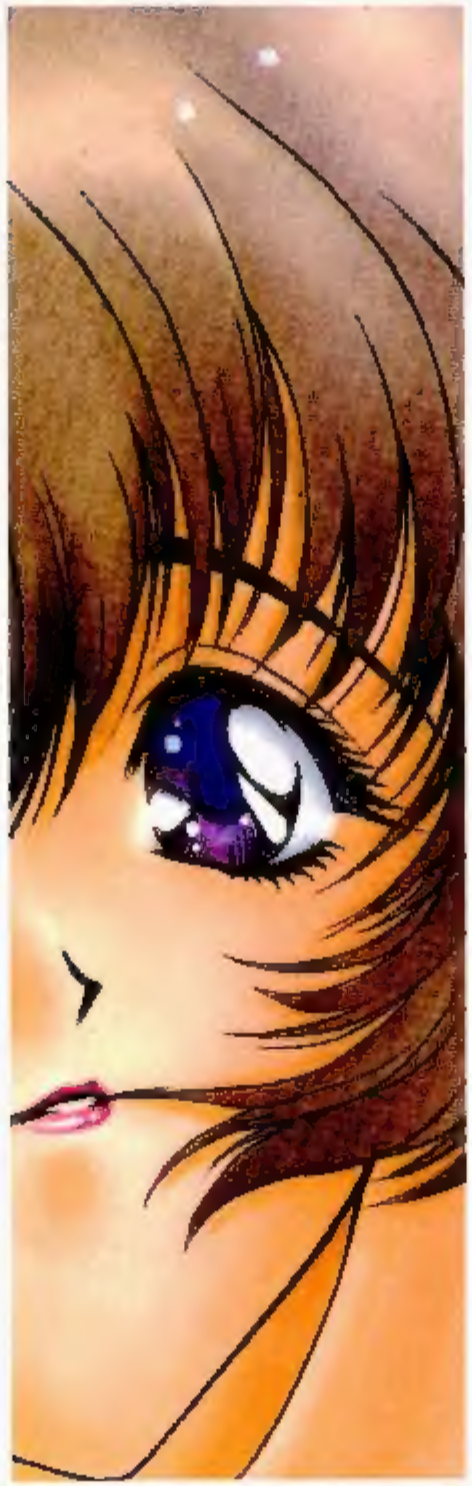

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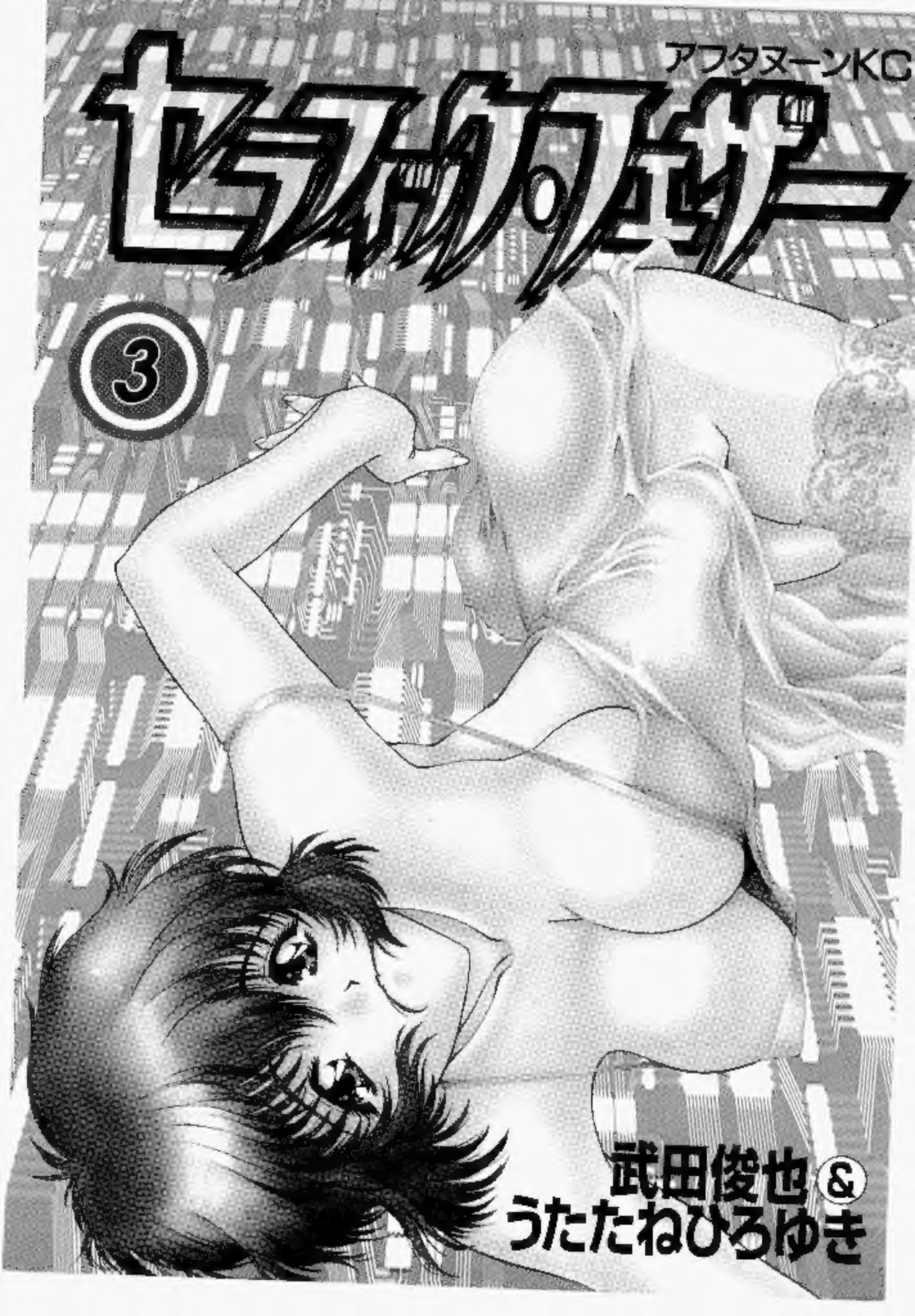
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